REPORT RESUMES

ED 013 809 24 TE 000 051
A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH, GRADE 4, UNITS 34-44.
NEBRASKA UNIV., LINCOLN, CURRICULUM DEV. CTR.
PUB DATE 66
CONTRACT OEC-2-10-119
EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC NOT AVAILABLE FROM EDRS. 153P.

DESCRIPTORS- *CURRICULUM GUIDES, *ENGLISH CURRICULUM, *ENGLISH INSTRUCTION, *GRADE 4, *LITERATURE, BIOGRAPHIES, CHILDRENS BOOKS, COMPOSITION SKILLS (LITERARY), FABLES, FICTION, FOLKLORE BOOKS, INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS, LANGUAGE, LITERARY ANALYSIS, MYTHOLOGY, POETRY, EPICS, NEBRASKA CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTER

GRADE FOUR OF THE NEBRASKA ENGLISH CURRICULUM EXTENDS AND REINFORCES CONCEPTS INTRODUCED IN PREVIOUS GRADES. AMERICAN FOLK LITERATURE, WITH ITS HEROES EXEMPLIFYING HEROIC QUALITIES OF THE CULTURE, IS STUDIED FOR ITS APPEAL TO STUDENTS AND ITS USE OF DESCRIPTIVE AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE. EFFECTIVE USE OF PHONOLOGICAL PATTERNS IS ILLUSTRATED IN "CHARLOTTE'S WEB" AND "BRIGHTY OF GRAND CANYON." IN "HOMER PRICE," FABULOUS AND PLAUSIBLE ADVENTURES ARE CONTRASTED AND PLOT PATTERN IS ANALYZED TO POINT TOWARD THE STUDY OF THE MODERN EPIC FORM. "HIAWATHA'S FASTING" AND THREE GREEK MYTHS EXPRESSING THE MORAL IDEALISM OF TWO CULTURES ARE USED TO FURTHER CHILDREN'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE MYTH. THE READING OF AESOP'S FABLES, STUDIED MORE ANALYTICALLY HERE THAN IN PREVIOUS FABLE UNITS, LEADS TO THE CHILDREN'S DRAMATIZATIONS OF STORIES WITH MORALS. "A BROTHER FOR THE ORPHELINES" POINTS OUT SIMILARITIES IN EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN OF DIFFERENT CULTURES. FINALLY, TWO BIOGRAPHIES--"WILLA" AND "LEIF THE LUCKY"--ARE READ FOR THEIR SIMPLE AND ACCURATE PRESENTATION OF FACT, THEIR VIVID CHARACTERIZATIONS, THEIR PORTRAYAL OF THE PASSAGE OF TIME, AND THEIR REVELATION OF EVERY SIDE OF A SUBJECT. THIS MANUAL IS AVAILABLE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS, 215 NEBRASKA HALL, LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68508. (SEE ALSO TE 000 048, TE 000 054, AND TE 000 055.) (JB)

ED013809

9

A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Grade 4

Units 34-44

TE000 051

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Grade 4

Units 34-44

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS · LINCOLN

TE 000 051

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED
BY B. Nicoll, Director of
Univ. of Nebr. Press
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING
UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF
EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE
THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF
THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

Copyright © 1966 by the University of Nebraska Press
All Rights Reserved

The materials in this curriculum were created
by funds supplied by
The University of Nebraska
The Woods Charitable Fund
The Hill Family Foundation
The United States Office of Education
(Contract No. OE-2-10-119)

Manufactured in the United States of America

PREFACE

The version of A Curriculum for English published here is an extension of the suggestions made in the Woods Curriculum Workshop of 1961; it is the result of a peculiarly close collaboration between Nebraska classroom teachers and scholars from Nebraska and the country at large--a collaboration particularly intense between 1961 and 1964. The curriculum covers the years of kindergarten through high school in detail and makes suggestions for the first year of college. It is not a panacea for present problems in the teaching of English; it is more like a half formed slave struggling to free itself from the stone. In some cases, the materials represent the state of the art in 1961; in some cases, that of 1967; many of the materials are as incomplete, as imperfect or simplistic as the group which created them. They are offered to remind their audience that scholars can concern themselves with schools and that teachers can fulfill the demands of scholarship; they are also offered for whatever use they may have in the classroom. Since hundreds of people collaborated in the creation of these materials, no names are attached to them. They should remain anonymous and peregrine.

The Nebraska Curriculum
Development Center

CONTENTS

Introduction vii

Unit 34: Folk Tale 1
Febold Feboldson

Unit 35: Fanciful Tale 11
Charlotte's Web

Unit 36: Animal Story 25
Brighty of the Grand Canyon

Unit 37: Adventure Story 37
Homer Price

Unit 38: Myth 47
Hiawatha's Fasting
Theseus and the Minotaur
Arachne
Phaeton and the Chariot of the Sun

Unit 39: Fable 67
The Fables of Aesop

Unit 40: Other Lands and People 81
A Brother for the Orphelines

Unit 41: Historical Fiction 89
Little House on the Prairie

Unit 42: Historical Fiction 101
The Matchlock Gun

Unit 43: Biography 111
Willa

Unit 44: Biography 123
Leif the Lucky

INTRODUCTION TO THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Nebraska elementary program is divided into units; the units center in the study of literature, often literature read aloud, and include work in language and composition integral to such study. It may be in order to describe the premises of the program.

I. Premises of the Program

For at least twenty centuries, the best literature produced in the western world was presented orally to audiences of many ages and social levels. And if it is true that great audiences produce great artists, then the audiences of such literature must have penetrated its meaning and been sensitive to its literary merit; there must have been some route of interchange of inspiration continually open between writers and audiences. From this it does not follow that children who as yet do not read should be insensible to the attractions of fine literature when it is appropriate to their level of intellect, imagination and rhythmic sense. Before a child is able to read, before he is able to cope with the only partially systematic English graphemic system, he has the need to come in contact with literature: if he cannot read, he can surely be read to--and this is a basic notion of the early units in this curriculum.

We should surprise few teachers in saying that children can tell stories, oral tales, cycles of tales; they can create their own literary culture so to speak, and they perhaps can do this best at the prompting and inspiration of excellent literary works. Storytelling, modeled and unmodeled, is thus a foundation activity suggested in this curriculum. The child's basically oral approach to literature will change as he masters reading skills, but he must know and feel that these reading skills are worth learning.

The elementary school program for language, literature and composition should not be confused with a reading program. It is neither such a program nor a substitute for such a program. The development of methods for the teaching of reading is the proper concern of the reading expert and not of this study. Further linguistic research may lead to improvements in methods for the teaching of reading; and, when sufficient research data indicates that these improvements have been made, they should be synthesized in this curriculum. Our concern is with showing such literature as will make reading worth the effort, composition an exercise in the imitation of excellence, and language study more than a bore.

The language, literature and composition program for the elementary school is designed to teach students (1) to comprehend the more frequent oral and written conventions of literature composed for young children--formal or generic conventions or simple rhetorical conventions; (2) to control these linguistic and literary conventions in their own writing; and (3) to comprehend consciously the more frequent grammatical conventions which they can handle in their speaking and writing.

One who plans an elementary curriculum must first identify the basic generalizations of the discipline, second, represent these generalizations so that they can be taught to children, and third, build a spiral curriculum which covers those basic concepts in ever greater depth, thus developing a progressively more sophisticated understanding of them. Once introduced in a relatively simple fashion, a concept will be treated somewhat more intensively each time it appears. All in all, the units of the curriculum intend to expose the student repeatedly to facts and ideas that he may use in order to proceed inductively to general conclusions about the conventions of good literature.

The child's sense of logic develops from an intuitive, anthropomorphic apprehension to the more analytical apprehension of the junior high school student. The curriculum's sequence of literary works and of suggested analogous compositions endeavors to display the same progress from the "mythic" and anthropomorphic to the realistic and the analytic, although this does not imply that the program at its upper levels ignores "fabulous" literature and comparable compositional forms. (The basic attitudes toward the psychology of children's literature, its relation to cognition, and the place of its emergence in psychology upon which this curriculum is based are set forth in the following books: Philippe Aries, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien regime*; Jan Van Den Berg, "Adults and Children," in *The Changing Nature of Man*: Northrup Frye, *Design for Learning* [a modification of the generic theory used in this program].)

II. The Units

The materials for the curriculum program in the elementary school consist of seventy specific units for the various grade levels plus two packets of ancillary materials: *Poetry for the Elementary Grades* and *Language Explorations for the Elementary Grades*. The units suggested for the elementary level endeavor to arrange literary works in an articulated sequence designed to develop the concepts essential to the literature program in the spiral fashion mentioned above. Sixty-nine of the units are divided into nine groups or "pseudo-genres":[1]

folk tales
fanciful stories
animal stories
adventure stories
myth
fable
other lands and people
historical fiction
biography

Some of the selections in the curriculum could obviously be placed in more than one group, but such a classification serves the purposes of the curriculum in that it allows for stress on certain elements of stories, which in turn allows the sequential development of the principles of the program. The stories have not for the most part been selected because they "fit" into one of the nine categories; rather, the committees have first selected literary works of substantial merit and then fitted categories to serve the purposes of the program most conveniently.

During a 1963 summer workshop supported by the Woods Foundation, the entire elementary program was revised and new units were developed, following a consistent format adopted during the process of revision. Some explanation of each section of the revised units may be helpful.

(1) Core Text

From the versions of stories or the editions of books recommended as core selections for each unit, the committees of teachers who worked on the Nebraska project have selected those versions or editions which they feel have the most usefulness to the program or the highest degree of literary integrity. It is not absolutely essential that the teacher always use the version or edition recommended, but she should make sure that any version used will be entirely suitable to the objectives of the unit. Core selections which are short and difficult to obtain are occasionally reprinted in the packets.

(2) Alternate Selections

Most packets list suitable substitutes for the core selections, should the teacher not be able to obtain or for any reason not wish to use the core selection. These alternates may be treated in much the same fashion as that suggested for the core selection: they will afford the teacher variety in materials as she teaches the program over a period of years. The alternate selections may also remind the teacher that she is strongly urged to develop her own units when she discovers other materials suitable to the program.

---

[1] The other unit of the seventy is recommended for the sixth grade level and discusses the poetry of Robert Frost.

(3) General Introduction

This section of each unit outlines the major objectives of the unit, discusses the "genre" of the works presented, and outlines the relationship between the unit in question and other units in the curriculum.

The articulation of the units in the program is extremely important: it gives the teacher of one grade some idea of what her students have done previously and what they will be expected to do later. It may save her from resorting to drills that will "teach her students to handle the language properly," in a vain attempt to cover every area of English in one grade.

The units which are suggested in the literature and composition program are not necessarily to be used at a particular grade level. They are sliding units: that is, the grade levels are suggested only. In dealing with the better students, the teacher may wish to cover both the first and second grade packets by the end of the child's first year in school. Again, in dealing with the slower students, the teacher may not cover more than the first half of the first grade units. The interests and abilities of the class will dictate the most suitable rate of presentation as well as the order of the units within a grade level packet. Sometimes it is mentioned that one unit should be taught before or after some other unit in the same grade level, but for the most part the order during any one year is left entirely to the teacher.

It is important, however, that the program follow the general sequence established within each classification. Within each "vertical" series of units (all the units on "folk tales," on "fanciful stories," on myth, fable, etc.) there is a definite progression from the first grade through the sixth grade units in the complexity of concepts presented. The charts on pages following show how these vertical sequences work, and how the progression from grade to grade is accomplished.

For instance, the "fable" units in the first two grades introduce the child to the common devices and patterns of the simplest fables. The literary purposes of those devices and patterns are exhibited by stories in the third grade unit. The fourth grade "fable" unit and the fifth grade unit on the fables of ancient India offer a more intensive, more analytical study of the classical fable form; the series culminates in the sixth grade study of Kenneth Grahame's The Wind in the Willows: the "epic" fable in a humorous, satiric, allegorical representation of the steady and the gross in modern society.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UNITS

Grade	FOLK	FANCIFUL	ANIMAL	ADVENTURE
1	Little Red Hen Three Billy Goats Gruff The Gingerbread Boy	Little Black Sambo Peter Rabbit Where the Wild Things Are	Millions of Cats The Elephant's Child How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin Ferdinand	Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain The Little Island
2	Little Red Riding Hood Story of the Three Pigs Story of the Three Bears	And to Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street	Blaze and the Forest Fire How Whale Got His Throat The Beginning of the Armadillos The Cat That Walked by Himself	The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins The Bears on Hemlock Mountain
3	Sleeping Beauty Cinderella or the Little Glass Slipper Mother Holle	The Five Chinese Brothers Madeline Madeline's Rescue	The Blind Colt How the Camel Got His Hump How the Leopard Got His Spots The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo	Winnie-the-Pooh Mr. Popper's Penguins
4	Febold Feboldson	Charlotte's Web	Brighty of the Grand Canyon	Homer Price
5	Tall Tale America Rapunzel The Woodcutter's Child The Three Languages	The Snow Queen The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe	King of the Wind	The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood Island of the Blue Dolphins
6	The Seven Voyages of Sinbad	Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass A Wrinkle in Time	Big Red	The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UNITS - Continued

	MYTH	FABLE	OTHER LANDS AND PEOPLE	HISTORICAL FICTION	BIOGRAPHY
Grade 1	The Story of the First Butterflies The Story of the First Woodpecker	The Dog and the Shadow The Town Mouse and The Country Mouse	A Pair of Red Clogs		They Were Strong and Good George Washington
2	The Golden Touch	The Hare and the Tortoise The Ant and the Grasshopper	Crow Boy	Caroline and Her Kettle Named Maud	Ride on the Wind
3	Daedalus and Icarus Clytie Narcissus	Chanticleer and the Fox The Musicians of Bremen	The Red Balloon	The Courage of Sarah Noble	Christopher Columbus and His Brothers
4	Hiawatha's Fasting Theseus and the Minotaur Arachne Phaeton and the Chariot of The Sun	Jacobs: The Fables of Aesop	A Brother for the Orphelines	Little House on the Prairie The Matchlock Gun	Willa Leif the Lucky
5	Ceres and Prosperine Atalanta's Race Jason The Labours of Hercules	Bidpai Fables Jataka Tales	The Door in the Wall	Children of the Covered Wagon This Dear-Bought Land	Dr. George Washington Carver, Scientist
6	The Children of Odin The Hobbit	The Wind in the Willows	Hans Brinker Secret of the Andes	The Book of King Arthur and his Noble Knights	Cartier Sails the St. Lawrence

CORRELATIVE UNITS: "You Come Too" - Poetry of Robert Frost - Grade 6; Poetry for the Elementary Grades; Language Explorations for Elementary Grades.

Insofar as fables usually treat of animals acting with human characteristics, the fourth grade unit on fables is related to all the elementary units containing stories about animals. As the study of a form which characteristically uses the oblique perspectives of satire, symbolism, and allegory, the series on the fable points to many other units concerned with other levels of meaning and with simple symbolism (for example, the Grade 5 unit, The Door in the Wall). Besides coordinating with other elementary units in an informal investigation of literary forms, expressions, and meanings, this fourth grade "fable" unit helps to form an important foundation for more analytical secondary units: units which take up the satiric use of the fable (ninth and twelfth grade units on satire); units which take up more sophisticated Greek literature (seventh grade unit on the classical myth, ninth grade unit on the epic, and tenth grade unit on tragedy); and units which take up techniques for attacking secondary levels of meaning (Grade 7 units, The Making of Stories and The Meaning of Stories).

Insofar as the fourth grade unit studies stories which express Greek moral idealism, it relates to the entire curriculum's consideration of literature as a vehicle for expressing the corruption of the nature of the good life and for expressing imaginatively the essential moral and ethical precepts and assumptions of our culture.

Again, the sequence of units on the folk tale, beginning with the first grade, presents familiar folk tales selected from a great variety of cultures and recorded in a great variety of modes; these works share characteristics stemming from their common origin in the body of oral folk traditions. The first grade unit concentrates on the oral and repetitive features of the folk tale; the second grade unit exhibits common plot patterns in a series of stories; and the third grade unit introduces the student to the magical world of fairy-land and reviews the common structural motifs of folk literature; the fourth grade unit and one fifth grade unit examine the tall tale, the most typical form of American folk literature. The other fifth grade unit on folk tales builds upon the knowledge of all those units to begin an investigation of the symbolic and allegorical meanings that the devices common to all folk literature tend to express. The stories become more rewarding as they become more complex.

(4) Background information for the teacher

This section discusses stylistic characteristics of the works, their structure, motif, theme, and the author and his style. Not every topic is included in every unit--for instance, a discussion of the author is not always pertinent or possible.

Note: The material included in this section of each unit, as well as that in the General Introduction, is for the teacher: it is not intended to be communicated directly to students at the elementary level. These materials are provided on the assumption that a teacher will teach more effectively if she understands something of the literary nature of stories and of their place in the curriculum. The teacher should know all that she can about the meaning and literary method of the work so that, whenever and wherever she can, she may bring to the students those insights that she has and, more importantly, so that she can encourage her students when they show evidence of gaining insights themselves.

> *But* the teacher should not deliver lectures and ready-made literary analyses to elementary school children. She should not deliver the background material in the units to students but lead them when and as they can to perceive what a work is about. She should not ask children to recognize and apply the technical critical terminology of the interpretive analyses given in these sections of the units: the primary purpose of the curriculum is to create understanding, not conventional bourgeois citizens or polite little boys, however desirable the creation of these may be.

Presumably the children will enjoy the stories; they will gain some initial bits of evidence for an eventual inductive recognition of the nature of some kinds of literature; and the patterns of the stories will furnish them with some preliminary tools for their own attempts to organize their own experiences into forms that others can understand and enjoy. [1]

(5) Suggested procedures

In planning with the literature units, the teacher must remember that the most important single facet of the program is the child's experience with the literature itself. Even as the poet endeavors to establish his relationship to his audience, so the teacher should seek to establish rapport with her audience before she begins to read to the children. The teacher who reads should be familiar with her story whether she reads it or tells it. She should know the rhythms of the sentences, the rhythm of the plot. She should have practiced the story so that she can read it through with a sense of the music of its language and meaning. If the book is illustrated, she should know when to show pictures and when not to show pictures. If the child reads a story or a creative composition to the class, he should have an opportunity to prepare himself for the reading. He, too, should have an opportunity to establish his rapport with the class. The reading of good literature to children or the reading of good literature by children should not be regarded as a reward for good behavior or something to do if the class has time; it should constitute a basic part of the school curriculum.

---

[1] The editors should like here to acknowledge their indebtedness during the preparation of these introductory essays to two of the most prominent books on children's literature, May Hill Arbuthnot's *Children and Books* and Huck and Young's *Children's Literature in the Elementary School*. Every elementary teacher should have these two standard works on her personal bookshelf. She also might see "Analyzing Literature in the Elementary Institute," an article by Paul A. Olson and Ned S. Hedges in *Source Book on English Institutes for Elementary Teachers* (published by MLA-NCTE, 1965) for notes on techniques and sample analyses.

The fact that the suggested procedures are divided into various sections--literature, composition, language exploration, extended activities--should not lure the teacher into believing that these activities are separate and unconnected. These divisions are made purely for the sake of convenience and uniformity in the organization of the units. The composition and language activities must grow directly out of the child's experience with the literature; the teacher should seize upon opportunities to unify activities and literature presentation. It is a basic premise of this curriculum that probably the best basis for building a child's competence in composition and his understanding of the nature and possibilities of his native language is an exposure to literature of superior quality over a relatively long period of time. The composition section rarely makes a distinction between oral and written composition exercises; this decision is left to the teacher on the basis of the abilities, interest, and readiness of her students.

(6) Poetry

Two "core" poetry texts are recommended for the elementary program: May Hill Arbuthnot's Time for Poetry and The Golden Treasury of Poetry, edited by Louis Untermeyer. In each of the units, related poems are suggested for study in connection with the units. If the poem recommended appears in one of these two "core" books, its title and author are listed. Poems for Grades K-6, along with suggestions for the teaching of poetry in the elementary school, are combined in the ancillary packet Poetry for the Elementary Grades.

(7) Bibliography

The study of the core book should not end the unit. If the student has properly mastered the concepts which the core book is intended to communicate, he should be ready to go on to read further works. The works suggested in the bibliography of the literature units vary in difficulty and in appeal to children, but each is related to the central matter studied in the unit. It is better for the teacher to overestimate the reading ability of the child than to underestimate it when she selects individualized readings which cluster about the core readings. The units presume that the teacher has made a careful effort to take an inventory of the child's literary interests to discover what books he reads, what books are read to him at home, what kinds of television programs he sees--in short, the kinds of entertainment which nourish him. A teacher who knows such things and knows them well may be better able to supply appropriate works for individual student reading.

III. Literature

A. The Child's World and Children's Literature:

It may be useful for us to set forth our conceptions of the history and purpose of children's literature.

Children's literature as a species of literature addressed exclusively to an audience of children would seem to have appeared fairly recently, emerging as a significant species only in the eighteenth century. Recent historians of childhood relate both the appearance and the distinguishing features of children's literature to changes which have occurred in the social pattern of western life--to changes in the idea of ideal childhood and ideal family pattern as these relate to general community patterns. As adult life became more complex in its technology and more remote from the life of the child, a separate species of literature appeared, setting forth the myths of childhood as opposed to the myths of adulthood. Whereas sixteenth century books for children are generally didactic books about the adult roles of a craftsman or a gentleman, or religious books which speak rather frankly of sex, death, and the meaning of life, the eighteenth century begins to produce a distinctive children's literature. The evidence available to us suggests that children in earlier times who read fiction at all read easy adult works--romances and fables--which were not censored to protect the "delicacy" of the child. The change from uncensored adult literature for children to a literature written specifically for a child audience appears rather obviously in The Perrault Mother Goose (1724). While the Perrault book contains such one time folktales as "Little Red Riding-Hood," "Tom Thumb," and "Blue Beard," the language of the tales is adapted to make them appropriate to a children's audience; they already display the special aesthetic features which mark children's literature--the aesthetic distance, the broad strokes and colors, the use of incremental repetition, the symmetrical episodic plot, and so forth. The sexual detail remains rather more frank than contemporary taste would dictate for children's books and the moral symbolism rather more obviously pointed by a moral.

Today's child reads a literature radically different from adult literature partly because he lives in a world radically separated from the adult world. At the pre-school or early school level he tends, as Piaget has shown, to see "nature" immediately before him and to relate its events to anthropomorphic personal or semipersonal forces rather than to an impersonal causal continuum. Technological specialization has destroyed the world of open shops through which the medieval-Renaissance child wandered, of benches where he took his place beside his father to learn his trade, and has replaced it with a professional-industrial world where adult roles are neither public nor obvious. New urban industrial social patterns generally protect the American child from basic adult experiences of sexuality, war, and death. Concomitantly, the child's literature portrays generally a nonnaturalistic, nonscientific physical world which may have more in common with that of the Greek myth-maker than with that of the contemporary adult. It deals with those roles in human society which are publicly and easily understood--often those symbolized by special apparel--the roles of peasant and king, of fireman, trainman, carpenter, and shipman. Death and sex are either not presented at all or presented in a flattened form: the wolf "eats up" Little Red Riding-Hood at no pain to her, the Prince's romance with Rapunzel is a rescue and a ride. Modern versions of "Red Riding-Hood" soften the ending even further, allowing the woodsman to find her cowering in the kitchen instead of in the wolf's belly. As adult social relations in the public world become more complex, the central social group in most literature that is attractive to children (aside from fable and myth) comes to be the family. Beyond the family group in modern children's literature, the world is distorted, comic, or even mysterious, dark, fearful, and wildly grotesque. (Conrad may have exaggerated slightly, but only slightly, when in writing about Galsworthy's Forsyte Saga, he said that all fairy and folk literature is essentially about the home.) To the degree that children do not understand the deeper, more complex motives and considerations which govern adult behavior, their literature presents flat characters. In its treatment of nature, of social roles and social life, of inner drives and inner psychological life, children's literature is set at some distance from adult ways of conceiving--not necessarily at equal distance from children's ways. Perhaps anachronistically the literature which most appeals to children is often called fanciful, surrealistic, mythic, improbable (anachronistically because probability is relative to the experience which measures it). In any case, teachers of children's literature could well consider how and why children's literature is different, how it sees things in a different slant of light from adult literature, particularly from so-called naturalistic or realistic adult literature which is more or less illusionistic or more or less an exploration of adult psychology.

B. The sense of form and plot:

If, in its treatment of nature, society, and the human personality, children's literature differs from modern adult literature, it also differs in aesthetic or style at the level of the organization of sentences and larger units. The characteristic aesthetic devices of the children's story (the episodic plot, the quick action with a sudden ending, the emphasis on rhythmic excitement, onomatopoeia, repetitive oral formulae, etc.) appear to appeal to senses of rhythm and form which are basic in the child and almost innate. So also do the common plot patterns.

The units of the curriculum repeatedly present variations of the four structural motifs of children's literature which are related to the sense of family and "other-than-family": (1) a small person's journey from home to isolation away from home; (2) a small person's or a hero's journey from home to a confrontation with a monster; (3) a helpless figure's rescue from a harsh home and the miraculous creation of a secure home; and (4) a conflict between a wise beast and a foolish beast. The family unit and the home are described as ultimately good, even if, as in (3) above, it may not be so originally for a small hero. That terrors lurk outside the home in many stories--wolves, tigers, the "dread of the forest"--may reflect the mystery of the technologically-oriented outside world for the child.

Various forms of the four basic plot patterns, appearing in many works throughout the program, should give the students some of the "form consciousness" which Mr. James Squire has indicated to be basic to reading and to composition. Rather than over-emphasize similarities among stories, a teacher should help students to see how a single plot type can be the vehicle of many different meanings; in short, she should point out similarities in order that the children recognize the differences in meaning and content.

* * *

All children's books do not "mean" the same thing. Stories which deal with the child leaving home may all dramatize much the same familial values, but the evils which each child encounters are usually quite different, and suggest a different meaning within each story. Peter Rabbit, Bartholomew Cubbins, and Little Red Riding-Hood all come from good homes, but Peter Rabbit meets the monstrous Mr. McGregor because he is imprudent; Bartholomew meets the monstrous king and the monstrous executioner because the social system in which he lives is unjust and silly; and Little Red Riding-Hood is destroyed simply because she is too little to make the discriminations needed before one is to venture beyond the home. The monsters encountered by the children in Little House on the Prairie are monsters which actually confronted the pioneers: natural disaster, snow, drought, Indians; the monsters which Pecos Bill encounters are similar frontier monsters, but presented in a different fictional mode, in an exaggerated heroic form. In the case of stories which begin in a harsh home, the fairy godmother who comes to rescue Cinderella is only a substitute parent; the guardian angel who comes to rescue the child in the "Woodcutter's Child" is more than this, for she is a kind of picture of conscience, of those things which remind us of our innocence and of our guilt.[1]

To accede to the above analysis of children's fiction may not be to teach it differently, except as a study of children's fiction from this perspective may bring a teacher to try more seriously to visualize what a specific child may see in a specific piece of fiction. The children's literature program of the Nebraska Curriculum Development Center, however, is organized not to pass over the peculiar features of children's literature but to place them in a heightened light so that, for instance, a single unit will contain nothing but stories in which nature takes on a mythic life and force or in which a child or miniscule figure journeys away from home to encounter a monster. The children are never asked to interpret a story directly; they certainly are not invited to become symbol mongers; the interpretation which they do, they do by picturing stages in the action of a story, dramatizing it. After they have a fairly good sense of the resources of a narrative mode, they write, in the mode of the story, a work of their own. What this method may do is to give children a scaffolding for the writing of rather longer compositions than would conventionally appear in their writing. It may also give them an opportunity to exploit, for their own purposes, the conceptual "gestalts," the rhythmic and aesthetic devices, of a body of art which answers to their peculiar understandings.

---

[1] Hence a teacher may properly be concerned with what may be spoken of as a "moral" or "philosophic" comment of a work for children--if one understands these words in a sense which is not too heavy handed. For instance, in works for children, the good person is usually beautiful and the wicked person, ugly: a technique which does not suggest that goodness makes one beautiful or that wickedness makes one ugly but which uses beauty as a symbol for goodness and ugliness for wickedness. The actions of ugly and beautiful people frequently establish the moral polarity of the work. Thus, good people in children's works are often portrayed as capable, through their goodness, of transforming the society about them (for instance in Cinderella or Little Tim), and the good are usually pictured as transparent and honest: what lies on the surface is one with what is within; on the other hand, evil and ugly people are full of mere complexity--as conniving, rationalistic, designing, subtle, and utterly closed sensibilities. (Footnote continued on next page.)

IV. Composition[1]

The program in composition tries to give the elementary student:

(1) a sense of the expressive possibilities of the sound of language;
(2) a capacity to manipulate syntactic patterns and to choose the "most desirable" syntactic pattern;
(3) a capacity to manipulate simple rhetorical devices (metaphor, simile, etc.) and a simple understanding of how consideration of the relation between speaker and audience affects one's handling of oral and written language; and
(4) a capacity to write in fictional modes analogous to those studied in literature readings and to add more analytic modes of writing to these very gradually.

In its portrayal of a moral universe children's literature does not always suggest the tragic sense that virtue and reward are not one, that both sorrow and lifegiving rain fall on the just and the unjust alike. The rewards of virtue in children's literature are granted from above almost, and they are both spiritual and physical. Cinderella receives the reward of the prince and happiness; Little Tim, a secure return to his home and success in school. On the other hand, the designing, secretive, and complex are not destroyed from above but destroy themselves--or somehow shed their wickedness; and their cruelty and wickedness almost never originate in the child's group but in the adult group--with the stepmother, with the unknown man who persecutes the black stallion; with large monsters whose actions are inexplicable; with the military stoats and weasels who take over Toad Hall. Thus, there is a sense of a kind of "granting" in the rewarding of good and of "earning" in the rewarding of evil--the sense of a world fated to be perfect.

[1] The treatment of two important topics, Composition and Language, is here necessarily brief. The teacher should also see the manuals for elementary teachers which are written expressly on these subjects.

A significant part of the Nebraska Curriculum Program is its provision for a wide variety of creative composition based directly upon literary study; the purpose of having children do creative composition is to get them to represent their own thoughts, their own fictions, and their own values in their own language, both oral and written. It is to give them a sense of the music of language, a sense that they can master that music. It is to give them a sense that they know forms of literature and can communicate through those forms. Children can learn to control a wide variety of the grammatical and lexical resources of the language in their compositions and a wide variety of the symbolic and representational resources offered by the literary forms if they are offered a sequence of literary models and invited to do model writing based on the sequence. The models offered for student emulation may represent syntactic, rhetorical, or literary forms.

It should be possible to display stories so as to give children a sense of their patterns and so as to allow children to create stories of their own which express their conceptions of the nature and meaning of things. It should be possible to allow children to make up narrative cycles around such patterns. It may be possible to give them visual models which show, for instance, the secure home, the monster, the rescue from the monster, and to ask them to compose stories concerning the visual models which are offered to them. Children at this level are perhaps more ready to handle fictional modes of communication than they are to handle direct modes of communication. This does not mean that their writing is second-hand writing. It means that they have mastered the conventions of communication of a literature which is properly theirs.

Children should first see what the language can do at its best, and they should then be given an opportunity to try for the best that they can do; children should not be so constantly reminded of mistakes that they come to feel they do not know the language and cannot become native speakers in the fullest sense of the word. Instead they should be led to the difference between the oral and written language and realize that they must include certain signals in their written language which are not necessary in the spoken language. They should understand that the thought of any writing is important, important enough to require the signals which will make that thought accessible to others. If the red pencil is to be used at all, it is perhaps better used to mark passages in student writing which are especially good. When the teacher corrects what the student has done, she might well say to the student, "I like this very much. Do you think that you might--------? You have a good idea here. How can we make it clear?" etc. As a substitute for the correction of compositions, the teacher might have students get together in small groups, read their compositions to each other, and make suggestions. Finally, the teacher who reads the child's composition to the class should never do so without the child's permission. If the child is asked to read the composition before the class, he should be allowed time to prepare for the reading, so that he can read with poise and fluency. At the earlier levels where a child cannot write down his own compositions, the teacher may wish to serve as a scribe, taking down the stories and observations which the children make. The language which the child uses should be altered as little as possible; it does not help a child to compose if the teacher in part makes up his composition.

To suggest that the punitive correction of a child's theme is not particularly efficacious is not to suggest that the teacher make no analysis. She should analyze carefully the usage levels which the child exhibits, the syntactic patterns which he uses, the logical processes which he appears to be developing, the narrative patterns which predominate in his stories. Such analysis should become, like the results of I. Q. tests and achievement tests, part of the teacher's background on a child. The analysis should permit the teacher to introduce the child to reading which will sharpen his sense of the possibilities of language in the areas where he is deficient or give him new insights into what he can do with narrative or expository prose. The analysis may give the teacher some understanding of the kinds of linguistic exercise which she should give to the children to give them a sense of the broad resources of the language.

V. Language

The materials for language study in the elementary school program consist of (1) a "language explorations" section in the part of each unit devoted to suggested procedures; (2) a separate resource packet, Language Explorations for Elementary Grades, containing a brief introduction to modern language study, a statement of the objectives of language study at each level, and a great number of linguistic games and activities useful in elementary school classrooms.

The whole of the language program for the elementary school is directed toward a few rather clear-cut goals. It is directed:

(1) toward displaying to children that English is primarily a word-order language, that the structure of English syntax is often of the utmost importance;
(2) toward giving children an understanding of the sound (phonology) of the language, its music;
(3) toward giving them an understanding of the language's historical dimensions (where our vocabulary came from, etc.) and of the evolution of its spelling system, understandings so important not only to spelling, but to reading; and

(4) toward giving them an understanding of the extent to which punctuation is a written representation of the suprasegmental features of spoken discourse.

The taxonomic study of language, like the analytic study of literature, depends on logical skills which are not sufficiently fully developed in the elementary school child to make the formal study of linguistics feasible at this level. Yet the study of phonology, morphology, and syntax, as well as of the history of the language and its dialects, does have some place in the elementary school; it can serve first as a preparation for a later formal junior high school study of linguistics and second as a device for freeing students and teachers from prescriptive attitudes toward language, attitudes which are likely to inhibit their flexibility in handling syntax and vocabulary. Since the child ordinarily enters school with a full intuitive grasp of the sound, morphology, and syntactic repertory of the language, he may appropriately be exposed to a language and literature program which will conform to and strengthen this grasp. Until the child has a good control of basic reading skills, the program must perforce be an oral one; even after the student controls the basic reading skills, however, a large part of the program may properly continue to be oral since such oral exposure to literature may quicken his ear to the "tunes" of language, sharpen his sense of syntax, and continue to widen his oral vocabulary.

VI. Conclusion

The elementary units do not make heavy demands on the overt analytical capacities of students: The stories exemplify important principles of literary form, and teach them without much suggestion that the student talk about the underlying formal principles. At the primary level, it may be both easier and more profitable for the student to perceive the principle by encountering the work than by talking about it. *Intellectualizing which is prematurely forced upon students may degenerate into mere manipulation of jargon.* Similarly, the generalizations describing the structure of our language, or the generalizations describing the structures of discourses can probably be embodied in explorations and activities appropriate to elementary children long before the children are able to discuss or write about them.

Although these ideas should not be discussed or written about in the elementary classroom, they can be taught to some level of the students' understanding, and taught in such a way that secondary school teachers can build on them. The elementary school teacher need not, indeed should not, lecture about the concept of the hero predominant in Ancient Greece; she should realize that an imaginative teaching of the story of the girl who goes out to meet the wolf may prepare students for a more perceptive reading of the story of the hero who goes out to meet the dragon. While the two stories do not "mean" the same thing or belong to the same genre, they do, in part, share something of the same form; thus a student who has been introduced sensibly, step by step, to elementary school stories in which a central character goes away alone from his home or his homeland to face its enemies will be better prepared to handle the communication of this particular narrative convention in more sophisticated Greek literature. Again, the child who has been allowed to create an oral-aural "literary culture" in his own primary classroom probably is likely better to understand how such cultures work when he studies the Odyssey or Beowulf.

One may say that the literature program moves from the world of children's literature in two directions: first, in the direction of heroic and mythical literature; and, second, in the direction of realistic literature. The less fully developed characters of children's literature are replaced by the subtle and carefully analyzed characters of the realistic novel. The fairy tale which ends, "and so they lived happily ever after" is replaced by the comedy; the adventure story, by the epic; the simple fable by such satiric fables as Animal Farm and Gulliver's Travels. Huckleberry Finn follows Tom Sawyer; The Tale of Two Cities follows Children of the Covered Wagon; the Biography of Samuel Johnson follows Willa.

In the area of linguistics, the linguistic explorations of the elementary school are replaced by the systematic study of the language proposed for the junior high school. In the area of composition, the creative compositions of the primary school are replaced by the more analytic compositions of the secondary school. The child who in the elementary school has explored the phonemic alphabet, syntactic manipulations, or compounding is likely better to comprehend these subjects when he encounters a formal study of them in the junior high school or high school. A child who has been asked consistently to make inferences and discover analogies is likely to comprehend better the nature of induction and the logical implications of analogies when he encounters these subjects, say, in the senior high school. The boy who has had to write for a particular audience, who has had to choose appropriate fictional or rhetorical forms for them, a diction, a "logic," a set of sentence patterns, and a rhetorical organization which is most likely to persuade that audience, may better understand the formal structure of the rhetorical discipline when he meets it in the senior high school.

As a student turns from the wide-eyed child to the gawky adolescent, the academic demands which are placed upon him are heavier and more complex. He is asked to be a man intellectually. He is likely to be a better man in this sense if he has known, as a child, the best literature which he can know at that level, if he knows a description of the language which is simple but accurate. Such is the belief, however naive, which underlies the structure of the elementary school program.

Unit 34: Folk Tale:

FEBOLD FEBOLDSON

FOLK TALE:
FEBOLD FEBOLDSON

CORE TEXT:

Walter Blair, Tall Tale America (New York: Coward-McCann, 1944).

ALTERNATE TEXT:

Paul R. Beath, Febold Feboldson (Lincoln, Nebraska: The University of Nebraska Press, 1948).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

This unit is an introduction to perhaps the most typical form of American folk literature, the "tall tale." Although most of the tall tales in American folklore probably originated with specific people, they are so expressive of the American spirit that they have been taken to the hearts of the American people, told, retold, expanded, and embellished so much that they are truly "of the folk." The stories surrounding the legend of the great Swede, Febold Feboldson, like the other bodies of tales concerning Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, Mike Fink, Johnny Appleseed, etc., humorously embody in one exaggerated hero the heroic qualities exhibited by the American people in their efforts to tame the West, to impose civilization on a new world dominated by powerful and often violent natural forces. The tall tale is valuable as an expression of the expansive enthusiasm with which the American historically has met problems and challenges, but its greatest value lies in the entertainment its straight-faced humor provides.

The objectives of the unit are (1) to introduce stories based on typical American folk literature; (2) to make students aware of geographical influences on stories and dialects; (3) to guide students to an appreciation of descriptive and figurative language; and (4) to provide students with an enjoyable experience with humorous stories.

Beginning with the first grade unit, the series of units on the folk tale moves through each grade level with a few familiar folk tales from a great variety of cultures and in a great variety of modes. In each group the children are introduced to works which share many characteristics stemming from their common background in folk tradition. The first grade unit concentrated on the oral and repetitive features of folk literature; the second grade unit on the common plot patterns of a series of folk stories; the third grade unit served as a review of the structural and repetitive devices of them all and as an introduction to the magical elements of fairy tales; this unit serves to introduce folk tales which are natively and distinctively American. It prepares directly for the fifth grade unit on the tall tale, and seeks to reinforce concepts of folk literature in preparation for the fifth and sixth grade folk tale units. It prefigures secondary units which deal with the techniques of folk literature and with the heroic legends that make up such a significant part of the literature embodying the ideals of Western civilization.

As a representation of a facet of the American West, Febold Feboldson is closely related to the units on historical fiction and biography that deal with the making of the nation. It will be especially interesting for the students to compare the problems that faced Febold with those that faced the characters in Little House on the Prairie and Willa, both included in fourth grade units. Since American tall tales tend to express the heroic qualities of men as they struggle with their problems and their environment, this unit builds directly toward the series of eighth grade units on the hero and toward the tenth grade unit, The Leader and the Group.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER:

Origin

Febold Feboldson was created as a bit of fancy for the now defunct Gothenburg, Nebraska Independent, a newspaper. Wayne Carroll, a local lumber dealer, seems to have created Febold for his column, which first appeared about 1923. Whether or not a "Big Swede" existed in Nebraska lore prior to that time is questionable, but Carroll at least named him and gave him heroic proportions.

Genre

As we have discovered in the other units on the folk tale, there is considerable disagreement regarding the origin of folk tales or even of what should properly be called folk tales. American folklore, particularly the tall tale, presents some rather special problems in this regard. According to an authority on American folklore, Louise Pound, in Nebraska Folklore, these tales are "the lore of the literary class, rather than the less-educated." In contrast to the essentially oral history of the folk tale in Europe, the American folk tale is found more readily among a reading group interested in folklore. Most European folk tales originated long ago in the relatively primitive stages of the development of the particular civilization they represented, and they were passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation long before they were recorded in writing. The American folk tale, on the other hand, existed for a relatively short time before it was recorded, since the American culture has from its beginnings been a highly literate culture.

Regardless of the origin of folk tales, they imaginatively represent the events of human life in all cultures. The customs, taboos, rules, and beliefs of the people are displayed in the tales, and they are to be interpreted according to the culture with which they originated. At times the folklore of America is tragic, especially in a great body of folk songs and ballads, but more often--with solemn tone--it is humorous and ridiculous. Consequently, the tall tale is one of the most representative forms of American folk literature. A story may, because of the highly mobile nature of American society, seem to come from a dozen different sources in various parts of the country. One version may be almost identical with another or it may be just a little more absurd. The teller frequently presents his story as though the incident actually happened to him, or as one that was related to him by a most honest and reliable person or progenitor.

Character

Usually the parents of the hero are vague or ordinary characters, but the hero is always quite remarkable, both in ability and size. His wit is sharp and his physical strength is tremendous. He not only makes light of hardships but looks for that which is challenging. He attacks the impossible, seldom loses, and wins against great odds. Frequently, he must "invent" something that will enable him to conquer his obstacles, so that many tall tales resemble Kipling's Just So Stories in their accounting for animals or customs or mechanical devices or the peculiar characteristics of those things. These same comments could be made about nearly any of the tall tale "heroes" of America--Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, Mike Fink, John Henry, Johnny Appleseed, Daniel Boone, Jim Bridger, Captain Stormalong, Windwagon Smith, and on and on. The teacher will discover no difficulty in applying these comments to Febold Feboldson.

As a hero, Febold Feboldson represents the characteristics of the pioneer all rolled up into one larger-than-life figure. In order to conquer the obstacles that beset him, the pioneer on the great plains had to be strong, courageous, inventive, persevering, and he had to have the capacity for humor that made constant discouragement bearable. In a very real sense, the hero of a series of tall tales embodies the ideal qualities required by the American people to tame the West.

Structure

The basic pattern of each of the tales about Febold is the same:

Febold is faced with some kind of problem, and through his strength, courage, and confidence he solves in a grand manner the problem at hand. The continuity of the narrative is served by the fact that Febold usually creates some new problem by the inventiveness of his solution. The plot of each episode corresponds roughly to the common folk tale pattern of the confrontation with a monster. Febold is, of course, no helpless child, but the home that he establishes on the prairie is precarious at best. The "monsters" that Febold faces are real enough; they are the monsters that beset all the early settlers in the plains states: heat, cold, wind, drought, flood, hostile Indians, wild animals, blizzard, hail, etc. The pattern throughout remains episodic and serial; the violent exaggeration of one solution usually leads to the "problem" of the next episode so that the entire book has a kind of loose continuity. Since the hero of a tall tale never dies, the last episode can never be written.

Style

Throughout the book, exaggeration, wit, and humor dominate. The language itself is simple and direct, imitative as it is of the language patterns of the common folk; but the stories are rich with the preposterous figures of speech characteristic of the tall tale. The most notable device in the stories is the characteristic formula: "It was so dry that . . . ," "It was so hot that . . . ," "The snakes (or mosquitoes, or cows, or watermelons, etc.) were so big that . . . " The natural obstacles that Febold faces are personified constantly: the drought, the heat, the cold, tornadoes, etc., seem to fight personally against Febold with grim personalities of their own. The figures of speech in this book are "so distinctive that" they offer an excellent opportunity for an investigation of the forms and qualities of various kinds of figurative language; the Language Explorations section in this unit explores this area in greater detail. Much of the exaggeration and humor so essential to the tall tale is contained in the figurative language of the book.

This book is somewhat more sparing of dialogue than most "tall tale" books, but there is enough dialogue included to furnish the student with sufficient evidence for some conclusions about dialect. The matter of regional and occupational dialect receives attention in the Language Explorations section too.

Theme

The theme of these tales is embodied in the characters, in the heroic characteristics of the western settler and the stupendous obstacles he had to overcome. The theme, like the humor and the language, is a thoroughly American one--hard work, inventive action, and perseverance are good; laziness, ineffectiveness, and self-pity are bad. The main job of the hero is to impose civilization on the wilderness, and he must bring strength and intelligence, method and efficiency, to the task of taming the frontier.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

Literature Presentation

I. To set the stage for these tales, one could lead off from a remark or an informal conversation about the weather, such as an untimely blizzard, or the heat, or the wind. This could lead into a discussion of some of the adversities of Nebraska weather and how tales grew out of such adversities. During hunting season an informal conversation could lead into the tales of Febold's hunting experiences.

II. Read several Febold tales. Although this unit was originally written for the Febold Feboldson tales only, the background information and the exercises are as easily applicable to the tales of Windwagon Smith--another legendary plains pioneer. Including a few stories about each hero will help to avoid an oversaturation with the kind of exaggeration upon which the humor of the tales largely depends. It would not seem necessary that the tales be read in any particular sequence.

III. Following the reading of a tale or two, a discussion on the characteristics of a tale or tales might be centered around these suggested questions:

1. What are the characteristics of a folk tale?
2. Why can this be called a folk tale?
3. What exaggerations did you hear in this story?
4. What problem did Febold face in this tale?
5. How did the problem develop?
6. How did the author explain or describe the problem to the reader? (Compare with other types of stories; perhaps something recently read.)
7. In what ways did Febold solve the problem that were different from the way most adults would have solved it?
8. What was the outcome of Febold's experience?

Composition Activities

I. Guided by the teacher, the students might discuss the characteristics which make Febold different from most adults. This could be an opportunity to bring out the characteristics of a hero or leader, such as initiative, strength, intelligence, responsibility, etc. The students might write brief descriptions of a person who embodies the characteristics of the hero or the leader, thereby beginning to experiment with expository writing.

II. As a class, the students could create their own original hero to explain some of the natural phenomena or to handle problems in their own locale. The pupils as one group could compose a story about their hero. This could lead into a creative written composition. Each child could add an anecdote by selecting an incident on his own and writing a paragraph or short tale about this hero. These tales could be compiled into a booklet with illustrations.

III. Let the children write a brief tale about a person with only ordinary abilities who is faced with a problem similar to one of Febold Feboldson's. How would an ordinary person react to the problem? What kind of "heroic characteristics" do most "ordinary" people have if they look for them and need to exhibit them?

Language Explorations

I. Diction

A. Figurative language

Have the students reword some of the sentences containing figures of speech. Discuss the effects the changes have on the meaning or the impact of the sentences. Notice whether the changes improve or decrease the effectiveness of the sentence, whether they simply "flatten out" the sentence, whether they actually change the central meaning, etc. The students should have a good deal of fun with this activity since the outstanding feature of the figurative language is its exaggerated humor, so the best source of examples will be from either the memory or the research of the students. Suggestions:

1. "Drouths at that time were as plentiful as flies around a jelly jar"
2. "Febold, as finicky as a kitten in a catnip patch, found the trees"
3. "Dark as a stack of black cats at midnight, the foreboding cloud saw Febold"
4. "plowed a bee-line for a boundary"
5. "The blizzard ruffled his frosty hair"
6. "The poor little spring blushed with becoming femininity."

B. Descriptive language

Have the students remove the descriptive elements from sentences and then discuss the changes in meaning and effectiveness that occur, after the fashion of the preceding exercise on figurative language. Making a distinction between "figurative language" and language that is only "descriptive" will help the students begin to recognize the special qualities and special effects of metaphorical writing. (The teacher should be familiar, or become familiar, with the Grade 9 unit, The Uses of Language.) After the students have discussed the changes that have occurred, have them substitute different descriptive words and phrases in the original sentences, attempting to recapture the tone (humor and exaggeration in most cases) of the original. Again, the examples are only brief suggestions; the best source is the class.

1. When thin smoke crinkled skyward from their banked campfire at night he dreamed of Sweden--the cool lakes, the mist-green pines that covered the hills.
2. One day Febold and Arabella went for a stroll, and the snake was rattling a little ditty as she writhed along.
3. Pecking for their dinner, they set up such an unearthly din that the sensitive string picked up the entire hullaballoo.

C. Dialect

Have students read Febold Feboldson and compare the dialect with that used in the Paul Bunyan and Mike Fink tales. If the students have difficulty recognizing dialect differences, the teacher may point them out. Reiterate the idea that dialects are found in various geographical areas of the country.

Extended Activities

The pupils could get acquainted with the elders in their community. Visitations might be arranged in the elders' homes or perhaps a nursing home or home for the aged in your community. After an acquaintance is established, induce the elders to relate stories, games, songs, riddles, the activities of their youth, etc. After the visits the children could write them up and make a newspaper or booklet of local folklore. Some advanced planning would be helpful for the children on how to communicate with elderly people.

POETRY:

HOW WE LOGGED KATAHDIN STREAM

by

Daniel Hoffman

Come all ye river-drivers, if a tale you wish to hear
The likes for strength and daring all the North Woods has no
peer:
'Twas the summer of 1860 when we took a brave ox team
And a grand bully band of braggarts up to log Katahdin Stream.

Bold Gattigan was foreman, he's the pride of Bangor's Town,
And there was no other like Chauncey for to mow the great pines down;
Joe Murphraw was the swamper, with Canada Jacques Dupree.
We'd the best camp cook in the wilderness--I know, for it was me.

We left from Millinocket on such a misty day
We dulled our axes chopping the fog to clear ourselves a way,
Till at last we reached the bottom of Mount Katahdin's peaks supreme
And vowed that we within the week would clear Katahdin Stream.

O, Chauncey chopped and Murph he swamped and Canada Jacques did
swear,
Bold Gattigan goaded the oxen on and shouted and tore his hair,
Till the wildwood rang with "Timber!" as the forest monarchs fell,
And the air was split with echoes of our axe-blows and our yell.

For six whole days and twenty-three hours we threshed the forest
clean--
The logs we skidded by hundreds, O, such a drive was never seen!

We worked clear round the mountain, and rejoiced to a jovial strain,
When what did we see but that forest of trees was a-growing in again!
Then all of a sudden the mountain heaved, and thunder spoke out of the
earth!
"Who's walking around in my beard?" it cried, and it rumbled as
though in mirth.
The next we knew, a hand appeared--no larger than Moosehead Lake--
And it plucked us daintily one by one, while we with fear did quake!

Paul Bunyan held us in one hand! With the other he rubbed his chin.
"Well I'll be swamped! You fellers have logged my beard right down to
the skin!"
"We thought you was Mount Katahdin," Gattigan shouted into his ear,
"We're sorry, but 'twouldn't have happened if the weather had been
clear."

Well, good old Paul didn't mind it at all. He paid us for the shave--
A hundred dollars apiece to the men, to the oxen fodder he gave.
And now, ye young river-drivers, fill your glasses--fill mine too--
And we'll drink to the health of Bold Gattigan, and his gallant lumbering
crew!

--Reprinted by permission of
Temple University Publications.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

For the Teacher

Jean Malmstrom and Annabel Ashley, Dialects--USA (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963).

Louise Pound, Nebraska Folklore (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959).

Teaching Folklore in the Classroom (Manhattan, Kansas: The Castle-Patrick Publishing Company).

For the Student

A version of "Febold Feboldson" that can easily be read by the pupils is included in Huber and Huber (ed.), They Were Brave and Bold (Evanston, Illinois: Harper and Row, 1962).

Harold W. Felton, Sergeant O'Keefe and His Mule Balaam (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1962).

Anne Malcolmson, Yankee-Doodle's Cousins (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1941).
Tales from the east, south, west, and the Mississippi valley have been collected and edited for eight- to thirteen-year-old readers. The tales identify the hard-working, democratic, industrious ancestors of America. Febold Feboldson is included.

Unit 35: Fanciful Tale:

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

FANCIFUL TALE:
CHARLOTTE'S WEB

CORE TEXT:

E. B. White, Charlotte's Web (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1952).

ALTERNATE SELECTION:

Robert Lawson, Rabbit Hill (New York: The Viking Press, 1944).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

Charlotte's Web, the core selection for this unit, moves back and forth between the world of fantasy and the world of reality. The "unrealistic" story of animals with human characteristics is set amid the fullness of a detailed realistic background. For the child, to move from the world of reality to the world of dream or daydream is an easy matter; to move from the world of daylight reality to a world of meaningful fiction where the fantastic mirrors the real and makes a meaningful moral commentary upon it is a more complex matter. This unit deals with a story in which such a movement from the world of the real to the world of fantasy forms the basis of meaning in the story.

As another unit in the curriculum which dramatizes the difference between a child's and an adult's conception of reality, this unit on Charlotte's Web has as its objectives: (1) to help children understand the characteristics of fantasy as contrasted with realistic stories; (2) to examine the ways in which fantasy mirrors the real world that we know; (3) to further understanding of some of the ways language works: the structures of sentences and paragraphs, the effectiveness of certain phonological patterns, etc.; and (4) to allow the children to have an enjoyable experience with a book that is particularly appealing to most of them.

As a unit which deals, not only with the world of fantasy, but with the difference between the real and the fabulous, this unit is perhaps most closely related to the other "fanciful tale" units which place the fabulous in the frame of daylight reality. The first grade unit (The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Where the Wild Things Are), the third grade unit (The Five Chinese Brothers and the Madeline stories), and the fifth grade unit ("The Snow Queen") all deal with stories that take place almost entirely in an ideal world. The fictional world mirrors to a certain extent the real world; one could say at least that the stories present the real world in a symbolic form. But Charlotte's Web is more closely related to those units whose stories indicate the movement from the real world to the fabulous world within the story: the second grade unit on And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street, the fifth grade unit on The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, the sixth grade units on A Wrinkle in Time and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and the third grade "other lands" unit on The Red Balloon.

As a story about animals, especially talking animals, the story relates to a rather large number of other units in the curriculum, a number of the animal stories as well as a number of folk tales, fables, and other fanciful stories. The community of animals bound together in friendship and common interest resembles to a certain extent similar communities in Winnie-the-Pooh, "The Musicians of Bremen," and The Wind in the Willows, and perhaps most closely "The Musicians of Bremen" since the animals join to escape a harsh fate and the story is more or less about one adventure rather than a series of loosely united adventures as in Winnie-the-Pooh and The Wind in the Willows. Besides the movement from the real to the imaginary, the main "theme" of the book treats of the cyclical patterns of the natural world, and as such, the image of nature in this book relates it to The Little Island (first grade "adventure" unit), Island of the Blue Dolphins (fifth grade "adventure" unit), Crow Boy (second grade "other lands" unit), and The Wind in the Willows (sixth grade "fable" unit). Charlotte's Web, with its very elementary approach to symbolism and even satire, builds directly toward the other units in the curriculum which present more intensive and analytical studies of the oblique perspectives of literary forms: the fifth grade units on "The Snow Queen," Grimm's Fairy Tales, and The Door in the Wall; the sixth grade units on Alice in Wonderland and The Wind in the Willows; and a great number of secondary units, beginning with the Grade 7 units, The Making of Stories and The Meaning of Stories.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER:

Author

E. B. White, better known as an essayist and editorial writer for The New Yorker, is an extremely versatile writer. He writes adult satire, children's fantasy, light verse, and serious poetry. He writes equally well about rural or city life, but he is said to feel more at home writing about the fields and farms. Prior to Charlotte's Web, E. B. White had written an extremely popular book about a heroic mouse, Stuart Little. Mr. White's books give us some charming animal fantasies that are distinctly American, especially pleasing since most of the good children's fantasy seems to have come from England, with British settings, speech, and cultural attitudes.

Genre

Although children's fanciful tales are modern in origin and in conception, they are based upon the old designs of the tales of magic. Talking animals who are distinct personalities poke their heads into such tales, and sometimes, as in the case of Charlotte's Web, people who can converse with them. In both modern fanciful tales and the old folk tales, the story is removed from the actual, everyday world of reality. But there are distinct differences between the old folk literature and the new stories because the modern stories are written for children rather than for "child-like" adults. The old tales had a rough texture and a general seriousness about them; the new stories are tender, optimistic, and full of gaiety, humor, and nonsense. The old stories were usually written for the purpose of moral instruction. The new stories frequently develop along complex satiric, symbolic, and allegorical lines; but the emphasis in modern fanciful literature is on "fun" and the primary objective is to entertain. Charlotte's Web contains some of the vestiges of the older didactic literature: surely there is a great deal of emphasis in the story on personal virtue. But the most important feature of the story as far as children are concerned is the quiet good humor and the rising development of the plot. What actually makes Charlotte's Web a "fanciful" story, however, is the treatment of reality in the story. The difference between the real world that adults see and the imaginary world that Fern and the animals participate in runs constantly through the story. The story begins in a real life situation with no suggestion of the magical, until Fern, who begins to spend most of her spare time with Wilbur after he has been banished to Uncle Homer Zuckerman's barn on a neighboring farm, begins to imagine(?) that she can hear the animals speaking to one another. In her imaginary world, the animals assume human feelings, thoughts, difficulties, etc. The story skips freely back and forth between the fanciful world of the talking animals and the "real" world of the human beings, without being bound at all by the imagination of Fern. Indeed, nearly all of the action concerning the animals takes place when Fern is not around, so it is difficult to determine where Fern's imagination leaves off and the "narrator's" imagination begins. Fern, changing as the wise Dr. Dorian has said children do, loses interest in the animal world at the end of the book and plays only an incidental part in the story after her compassion and her "imagination" have created the animal society as a microcosm of the human society in the first place. When Charlotte spins the first words into her web ["SOME PIG!"], the animal world removes itself from the single imagination of Fern, and the reader is prepared to go along with Dr. Dorian's explanation: It is quite possible that an animal has spoken civilly to me and that I didn't catch the remark because I wasn't paying attention. Children pay better attention than grownups." From this point on, if not before, the animal society is treated as a matter of fact instead of just a matter of fancy.

Structure

The story in Charlotte's Web is a story of maturation: both Wilbur and Fern mature in the course of events, in the natural cycle of growing up. The story is structured around a series of threats to Wilbur's life: he is first threatened because of his smallness and then because of his delectability as a fat young hog. In each episode, someone comes along to save Wilbur's hide; after the first time (when he is saved by Fern), Charlotte serves as his main protector. Each incident in the story builds upon the next, with each problem becoming more and more complex and becoming more demanding on the intellect and the loyalty of Charlotte. After encountering all sorts of dangers, Wilbur survives to be really a quite intelligent and grateful sort of pig, much wiser in the ways of the world, and quite secure in his home because of the sacrifice and industry of his friends.

Character

The story has the quality of the folk tale and the fable in that the author quite obviously develops the characters more as types representing human qualities than as individuals in and of themselves. The animal characters are animals after all, however, and they are fortunately not humanized completely. While the animals retain some animal characteristics, they assume symbolic or allegorical dimensions. Just as in The Wind in the Willows, the animal society is built upon both the wise, natural values of the animal world and the qualities and foibles of human relationships. Every animal has his place in the common defense of the natural community. The geese are foolish, but they are good-hearted. The old sheep is wise, but he is unnecessarily cruel in tormenting the rather dull little pig with the thoughts of his future butchering. Charlotte is exceedingly loyal, patient, intelligent, and a genuine friend, but she is not without her sharpness at times. Wilbur is frequently foolish, and terribly naive, but he is exceedingly lovable, yes, even "radiant." And even Templeton's greed serves the good ends of the society when it is handled with wisdom.

The story does not turn always upon the contrast between the wise beast and the foolish beast; it turns rather more upon the foolish beast maturing into the wise beast, or the group of individuals becoming a truly interdependent society. There are no sharp lines of good and evil in the story; most of the characters, both animal and human, constitute a threat to Wilbur or his friends at one time or another in the story. All of the characters, however, eventually sense that they are bound together by ties of humanity which make foolishness and evil endurable. Mr. White has not created a perfect society in his book, nor has he sentimentalized about the bonds of friendship and humanity; quite to the contrary, his book demonstrates how the weaknesses, foibles, and selfish interests that all people have must be used to support the common good.

Style

The style of the story changes appropriately as the narrative moves from the world of reality into the world of fantasy and back. As the author enters the world of fantasy with Fern, and as the story moves toward its climax, there is a progressively greater complexity of style and description. The book is especially full of rich realistic detail in its descriptions, full of concrete, particular diction that comes very close to becoming too realistic and detailed when it describes Wilbur's dinner so thoroughly. In these descriptions, sensory perceptions carry most of the weight, with little demand on the general imaginative effort of the reader. One can very nearly catch the clean sweet smell of the clover, or the dark, heavy-sweet odor of the barn; one can almost certainly smell Wilbur's lunch. Some of the loneliness of the inexperienced young pig, the mystery of Charlotte's spinning processes, the excitement of the fair, and the strange sad peacefulness of death are brought out by the narrative. Most of these emotions, however, are borne by the very appropriate dialogue. Morover, the characterization of the animals through their speech, the assignment of a consistent pattern of behavior to each character, and the successful preparation for the climax are the marks of White's stylistic genius.

Theme

In spite of the simplicity of the story, Charlotte's Web carries off a number of significant themes effectively. The major theme of the book seems to be the imaginative presentation of the cyclical patterns of nature. Life and death are made very natural and rewarding in the book, and the continuity of life in nature is asserted convincingly. The characters, since they do not lose their animal nature when they gain human qualities, reflect the good and the bad in the processes of cyclical patterns of nature. In their society they dramatize the interdependence of the creatures of nature; every creature has its usefulness to the society and to the balance of nature. The book also contains some symbolic and satiric meanings, although it would probably be out of line to assign a consistent social or political allegorical interpretation to the book. Certainly, however, the animals reflect human excellence and limitations. Thus the story is concerned with how man's moral imagination transforms reality and makes it meaningful. _Charlotte's Web_ has a solid basis of real, naturalistic detail; it does however also shift back and forth at will between the fanciful world and the world of adult reality until even the adults in the story become involved in the magic and fantasy. In the operation of such processes, _Charlotte's Web_ gives a very simple diagram of the nature of a large part of literature itself.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

Literature Presentation

I. Preparation for reading the story might include the following activities:

   A. The teacher might present pictures of the farm animals encountered in Charlotte's Web and request identification of each of the animals. Such identification would be particularly helpful in an urban area. A record of farm sounds might help to create a proper atmosphere for the reading of the story.

   B. The teacher in setting the scene for fantasy might ask the following questions:

      1. If you were to talk to a spider, what might you say? How do you suppose the spider would act? Let's write down your ideas, then see if Charlotte, the spider in our story, acts the way you might think she would act. After we have read the story, we can tell how accurate we were in describing Charlotte.
      2. Charlotte is not the only character in our story. We will meet a pig, some geese, a lamb, a rat named Templeton, and a little girl named Fern. Where do you suppose this story takes place? Would you be likely to meet these animals in the city? Where? Why?
      3. When you were small, did you have an imaginary playmate? Did you ever pretend your dolls or your teddy bear could understand you or answer your questions? When we read this story, we will find out what kinds of friends Fern has.
      4. How many kinds of animals seem to talk? (Parrot, mynah bird, etc.) If we read about talking animals in a story, can the story be true? After we have read Charlotte's Web we can decide what kind of story it is.

II. It is recommended that the teacher read the book aloud to the children, but the book should also be made available to those students who have missed class and want to catch up and to those who want to reread the story for themselves. It would also be advisable to have a number of copies of the book available to the students so that they may be able to search through the book for material for language exploration exercises and composition exercises. Skillful reading of the book will enhance the pupil's enjoyment considerably, since so much of the "meat" of the book is contained in the delightful dialogue.

III. Discussion

A. Discuss with the children the characteristics of the different animals and adults in Charlotte's Web. Try to lead them to discover how it is that an author communicates significant personality traits. Try to get the children to realize, too, that animals are frequently treated in stories as human beings to make some significant comment on human society and on desirable and undesirable human qualities.

B. In a discussion try to get the children to discover the "plot line" of the story. When the story is finished, the children should decide where the climax of the story was reached. They should discuss the feeling one gets when he reaches the high point of the story. Where does it occur? What feeling does one have after this point has been reached? List the incidents that lead up to the climax and what feeling, if any, follows this point. (The high point of the story comes in Chapter 20, where Wilbur is the honored one at the fair and Charlotte dies.)

C. Fourth grade children should be sophisticated enough to attempt some analyses of the meaning of literature. Try to get the children to explore the difference between fantasy and reality and to discover how a story with magical elements such as this one has some meaning in the real adult world. In such a discussion the children should be able to recognize the treatment of the interdependence of all creatures of nature, because of the dominant characteristics of the assorted characters in the story. They should also recognize the expression of the cyclical patterns of nature.

Composition Activities

I. Ask the children to write riddles about the characters in Charlotte's Web, giving outstanding characteristics of each. When reading these, read only a sentence or two at first. If the class does not guess, give further details.

Examples:

Though I seemed very insignificant at first, I became famous. People thought I was amazing. But they really should have given the credit to my loyal friend who miraculously saved my life. Who am I? (Wilbur)

Feasting and drinking are my chief pleasures. Some people would call me selfish because I do not like people to impose upon me. But I am really a very helpful errand boy. Who am I? (Templeton)

II. If the children have participated in a school carnival, they might enjoy writing stories based upon the question, "If the greedy Templeton were a boy instead of a rat, what would he do at a school carnival?"

Language Explorations

I. Diction

Select several passages which create the mood of the story. Each child might write a paragraph which would make others feel the moods of loneliness, excitement, suspense, fright, etc. The children could discuss the qualities that make up one mood--suspense, for instance. Then they should attempt to reconstruct the same feeling in their own writing. For example, they might choose to write a paragraph describing fright, or a frightening situation, and they would select such words as suddenly, dark, ugly, goose bumps, quivering, cloudy, rainy, lonely, black, strange, running, according to their individual vocabularies. The class would select the words to be written on the board for all to see. Each child would attempt to create a paragraph describing his own feelings of fright. The efforts should be shared orally when completed. Pictures setting a mood for descriptive writing might be employed. Music might contribute to the establishment of the mood, also.

Try to lead the children to the realization that the effectiveness of language frequently depends upon the concreteness and the particularity of the diction. The teacher does not need to introduce these terms, but she should lead the children to the realization that words which are very specific in their referents are frequently more effective than abstract and general words.

II. Vocabulary

Write the words on the chalk board which Charlotte weaves into her web which describe Wilbur, as: "Radiant," "Some Pig," "Terrific." Discuss the meaning of these words as they relate to the specific use in this situation. Discuss how other meanings of these words might be used in different contexts.

III. Syntax

Have each pupil look through a library book that he has available and notice the arrangement of the content into paragraphs. Ask if they notice any means of telling what determines a paragraph. Help pupils to note that a change of speaker involving direct quotations indicates a new paragraph. The pupils will probably find that all paragraphs neither necessarily express a single main idea nor have a single "topic sentence," and that every idea expressed is not necessarily closely related to the topic sentence (if present). Rather pupils should perceive that the individual style of the author is reflected in the paragraph. Then have the pupils look at a history, science, or geography book and note the use of the paragraph. In this expository material the paragraphs are more closely knit and usually are concerned with the presentation of a single idea or series of related facts. Discuss how pupils might develop the paragraph in their own compositions.

Extended Activities

A teacher-made poster can arouse the students' interest before this story is presented. A large web might be made using wrapping paper, folded and cut in much the same manner as paper snow flakes are. On top of the web, a large spider made of construction paper and pipe cleaners could be placed. Within the web, the question "What happened to Charlotte A. Cavatica?" could be written with yarn.

POETRY:

Walt Whitman, "There Was a Child Went Forth"
Golden Treasury of Poetry
(This poem expresses the sense of kinship between a child and the natural world, the same sense of kinship that undergirds Charlotte's Web.)

Ogden Nash, "The Tale of Custard the Dragon"
Golden Treasury of Poetry
(The animal in this tale of the friendship between a little girl and her pets, contrary to the animals in Charlotte's Web, does not live up to his reputation.)

Emily Dickinson, "A Day" Golden Treasury of Poetry
(After students have considered the precision that can be attained with language, they will enjoy hearing this poem that uses precision of language to bridge the imaginative gap between the real and the fanciful.)

A FAIRY WENT A-MARKETING

by

Rose Fyleman

A fairy went a-marketing
She bought a little fish;
She put it in a crystal bowl
Upon a golden dish.
An hour she sat in wonderment
And watched its silver gleam,
And then she gently took it up
And slipped it in a stream.

A fairy went a-marketing
She bought a winter gown
All stitched about with gossamer
And lined with thistledown.
She wore it all the afternoon
With prancing and delight,
Then gave it to a little frog
To keep him warm at night.

A fairy went a-marketing
She bought a coloured bird;
It sang the sweetest, shrillest song
That ever she had heard.
She sat beside its painted cage
And listened half the day,
And then she opened wide the door
And let it fly away.

A fairy went a-marketing
She bought a gentle mouse
To take her tiny messages
To keep her tiny house.
All day she kept its busy feet
Pit-patting to and fro
And then she kissed its silken ears,
Thanked it, and let it go.

--From Fairies and Chimneys, by Rose Fyleman.
Copyright 1918, 1920 by George H. Doran Company.
Reprinted by permission of Doubleday & Company, Inc.

(This poem by Rose Fyleman has a light, airy feeling. The words like "gossamer," "thistledown," or "tiny messages" help to convey this impression. As in Charlotte's Web the use of an exact, precise word for a given context adds to the reader's enjoyment.)

JONATHAN BING'S MANNERS
by
Beatrice Curtis Brown

Jonathan Bing takes off his hat
Whenever he meets a Tabby-cat;
Jonathan Bing bows down to his toes
Whenever he passes a sheep he knows.
Oh, search from Paris to old Japan,
There's none so courtly as Jonathan!

I've seen him murmur a "how-d'you do"
To a tired forsaken dancing-shoe;
I've seen him lend his handkerchief
To a watering-can that had come to grief.

I've seen him pat without disdain,
An orphan goldfish who had a pain,
And he even lights the fire, I'm told,
To warm the air when the weather's cold.

So what does it matter that people say
That he eats his peas in a vulgar way,
Or opens his mouth to yawn so wide
That twenty chickens could roost inside?
Oh, search from Paris to old Japan,
There's none so courtly as Jonathan!

--Reprinted by permission of Curtis Brown, Ltd.
Copyright 1936 by Beatrice Curtis Brown, copyright renewed 1964 by Beatrice Curtis Brown.

(The manners of Jonathan Bing may be contrasted to those of Templeton.)

THE FAMILY DRAGON
by
Margaret Widdemer

Last night there walked across our lawn a beast we didn't know--
We saw his little footprints marked quite plainly in the snow.
It might have been an ocelot, or perhaps a grizzly bear--
We hoped it was a dragon, come out walking from its lair;
We didn't want a grown-up one, all fire and scales and foam
But just a baby dragonlet that we could carry home;
We'd keep him in the nursery and give him a nice name,
And have him for a fam'ly pet, with ribbons on, quite tame.
We tracked him down the meadow path and all along the hedge
And there his little footprints stopped close up beneath the edge,
For there the snow had gone away--there wasn't any track--
And it was tea-time anyway, so both of us went back.
But we shall go someday quite soon and find him in his lair,
And capture him while he's asleep, and tie him up with care.
And we will have the 'spressman come and put him in his wagon
And bring him home to stay with us and be our family dragon.

From LITTLE BOY AND GIRL LAND by Margaret Widdemer, copyright, 1924, by Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.; renewed, 1952, by Margaret Widdemer. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, Miss Hickory (New York: The Viking Press, 1946).

Selma Lagerlof (tr. Velma Swanston Howard), The Wonderful Adventures of Nils (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1907).

Robert Lawson, Ben and Me (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1939).

Mary Norton, The Borrowers (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Company, 1953).

Pamela L. Travers, Mary Poppins (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Company, 1934).

Unit 36: Animal Story:

BRIGHTY OF THE GRAND CANYON

ANIMAL STORY:
BRIGHTY OF THE GRAND CANYON

CORE TEXT:

Marguerite Henry, Brighty of the Grand Canyon (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1953).

ALTERNATE TEXT:

Felix Salten, Bambi (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1946).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

The story for this unit is another realistic story about animals, with an attitude toward animals generally like that of Blaze and the Forest Fire (Grade 2), The Blind Colt (Grade 3), and Big Red (Grade 6). Both the characters and incidents of this book are based on actual fact, yet the children will discover in this story a number of the patterns and devices common to other more "imaginative" stories that they know. The objectives of this unit are (1) to present an enjoyable realistic animal story; (2) to enable the children to understand the qualities of human beings by examining the qualities of a "noble" animal; (3) to extend the children's understanding of the literary uses of language; and (4) to enable the children to make more observations of dialect.

As a story which treats of animals in a more or less realistic fashion, Brighty of the Grand Canyon relates most closely to the other "animal story" units in the elementary program which operate within the same fictional mode (as mentioned above). It is also important to consider this unit in relation to units which present contrasting views of animals: such units as the first grade units on folk tales, fanciful tales, and animal stories; the units on the Just So Stories in the first three grades; and all of the "fable" units. As a story which has a real "hero," Brighty of the Grand Canyon bears comparison with the units on the adventure story, which contain human "heroes." With its vivid descriptions of natural phenomena, the book should be compared with The Blind Colt (third grade animal story), Charlotte's Web (fourth grade fanciful story), The Little Island (first grade adventure story), Island of the Blue Dolphins (fifth grade adventure story) and The Wind in the Willows (sixth grade fable). Because of its realistic consciousness of the processes and glories of nature, the unit helps to prepare for such secondary units as the Grade 10 unit, Man's Picture of Nature. The handling of the dialect in the book should be compared with the treatment of dialect in the third grade unit on The Blind Colt, the fourth and fifth grade units on the American tall tale, the sixth grade unit on Big Red, and the ninth grade unit concerning dialects.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER:

Author

Marguerite Henry has long been interested in both horses and writing. When she writes a book she spends a great deal of time verifying her information; she writes hundreds of letters and takes long trips to secure the information she needs. Her first book was *Auno and Tauno* which was followed by two series of picture geographies. During recent years she has concentrated upon stories of animals, especially horses. She has written *The Little Fellow*, *Justin Morgan Had a Horse*, *Misty of Chincoteague*, *Brighty of the Grand Canyon*, *Born to Trot*, and *Gaudenzia: Pride of the Palio*. Her *King of the Wind* was a Newbery prize winner in 1949. One would expect an author who writes a good deal of non-fiction and who spends a good deal of time doing research before writing her stories to write in a fairly realistic mode; this she does.

Genre

There are in general two "kinds" of animal stories: (1) those that present animals as capable of thought, emotion, the power of speech, and actions which mirror human actions; and (2) those that treat of animals realistically as animals, with strictly animal characteristics. Each of these two general "kinds" of stories, of course, has innumerable gradations of how much an animal is "humanized." Some stories of the first kind, especially folk tales and fables which use talking animals as characters, use the animals only as human beings in disguise, with little or no attention to the true nature of the animal. Other stories of the first kind treat the animals essentially as animals, but with the power of speech. In general, the more closely the author makes the animals conform to animal behavior, the better the story, although this is not a safe generalization to apply universally. Peter Rabbit is hardly a rabbit at all, he is more like a rather naughty little boy; but it would be difficult to improve on Beatrix Potter's story. On the other hand, stories such as *Charlotte's Web* and *The Wind in the Willows* derive much of their charm and effectiveness from the fact that the animals behave according to their animal nature, while the authors have skillfully selected animals with dominant characteristics that will reveal the meaning of the stories when applied to the world of human beings.

There are also gradations of the extent to which animals are humanized in the second general type of stories. Some stories of this type assign the animals no human characteristics at all. Others, while not giving the animals the power of speech or making them act like human beings, do assign to the animals humanized thoughts and emotions. Many adult readers object to this procedure because they feel it is not "realistic," but it is natural for children to think of animals as having thoughts and feelings parallel to their own in similar situations. Marguerite Henry's books make animal life so vivid that children easily identify with it, even though the animals are never humanized. In our story of Brighty of the Grand Canyon, Brighty remains true to the characteristics of burros, but the book is written in such a way that children can see traits which they admire in human beings--fortitude, loyalty, and zest for life.

Structure

While the human characters and animals who are in the forefront of Brighty are "realistically" presented, the central situation around which the novel turns comes right out of the Gothic murder mystery. Uncle Jimmy, the Old Timer, Homer, and Brighty are "type" characters who belong to the realm of the probable and possible; they possess that love of humanity, that simplicity, that willingness to live and let live which constitutes one of the ethical poles of the novel. But the villain, Jake Irons, is a despicable and melodramatic person, more characteristic of the melodramatic murder mystery or Gothic novel than of the realistic novel, more at home in the world of Dickens than of George Eliot.

The basic structural motif that the children will recognize in this book is the confrontation with a monster while the hero is in isolation from his "secure" home. The pattern does, of course, have any number of variations from the simple plot pattern: first of all, the "hero" is an animal; second, the "secure home" is actually the freedom to live at peace in the Grand Canyon; third, Brighty encounters all sorts of "monsters" during the course of the story in a series of episodic incidents, although the story has some basic continuity with the mystery of the fate of Old Timer and the suspense created by the long-delayed final encounter with Jake Irons. Except for the melodramatic threat of Jake Irons, the "monsters" that Brighty faces during his adventures are natural enemies--the river, blizzard, hostile burro stallions, etc. The presentation of what Brighty and his friends can do against these realistic "monsters" includes no magic; it takes no "unnatural" accomplishment to secure Brighty the freedom and happiness which go to form his "secure" home in the canyon.

Style

Nature is presented in the novel in all its awesome magnificence, in a land of friendly valleys, huge canyons, and rugged peaks with their forbidding snows. But nature, more than simply a setting, mirrors men's actions and attitudes. On happy days nature is happy too, and there are wonderful smells and cool breezes everywhere. But dark fierce storms arise when destructive men are at their business. That the presentation of nature is so vivid is due partly to the author's capacity to handle metaphor and simile, partly to her skill in compounding (often in hyphenated expressions), partly to her careful handling of sensory detail. Throughout the book the reader feels, sees, tastes, and hears everything right along with the lovable mule: forest smells can be smelled, sweet griddle-cakes tasted, and salt blocks savoured. The bitter cold produces goose-bumps on the reader's skin, and later on he suppresses a giant yawn beside the cozy-warm fireside.

Theme

Brighty is an animal adventure story with a real setting: the Grand Canyon. Brighty acts somewhat as an orphan who desires and needs friendship but yet, due to instinct, still needs to be free. In his desire to maintain his freedom, Brighty enters upon a great many perilous adventures that threaten his life. The perils increase in intensity until the end of the book when Brighty is held captive at the cabin. The climax of the story is here. At this point there is a rescue by his faithful and understanding companion, Uncle Jim. It is also at this point that the mystery of the murder of Old Timer is solved. Although the reader can guess what will happen, the action takes place in various surprise settings, and the forward movement of the book is never lost. Our knowing that Jake will eventually be caught does not detract from the plot development in any manner.

The climax of the story ties the book up with its central theme--justice must triumph. But there is more to the book than this simple theme arising from the single plot thread of the Old Timer's murder. The freedom of Brighty, the service he performed by blazing the trail down along Bright Angel Creek, and the loyalty of Uncle Jim contribute to the thematic structure of the book. The end of the story is especially satisfying, leaving one with the feeling that the remainder of Brighty's life is secure, free, and almost entirely without danger. It is through the reading of animal stories such as this one that children learn the harsh lessons which living things must learn in their struggle to exist. They learn the cruelty of some human beings toward animals; yet they also learn about patience, courage, kindness, and loyalty.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

Literature Presentation

I. As preparation for this story, the class might discuss the Grand Canyon area. Some children may have seen the Grand Canyon of the Colorado; perhaps they have even seen and may remember Bright Angel Trail along Bright Angel Creek in Arizona. They may like to locate the Grand Canyon on a map. They will want to discuss and understand a burro's legendary stubbornness and determination along with its lovableness.

II. The story should be read aloud by the teacher, in blocks depending upon the length of the class period and the interest of the students.

III. Probably after each reading session the teacher should lead a discussion of the section which was read. The teacher might try to direct the discussion toward those elements of the story treated in the background information of this packet, though not at the expense of student interest. There is a multitude of exercises on language explorations in this packet that should be considered during these discussion periods.

Composition Activities

I. The teacher might begin an animal adventure of her own and tell it until some peril is reached and let the children finish it, either by adding another peril or by letting the animal be a hero after the first big danger.

II. Children might like to write a story beginning "If I had a pet burro, ... " or "If I were a burro, ..."

III. After the chapter "Brighty, B. A.," discuss the following similes:

"Men . . . like ants busy on an anthill." (p. 116)
When might men move like other creatures?

"As the web grew, men . . . . seemed to be held in it like flies." (p. 117)
Why were the men said to be held like flies?

People are compared in one respect to mules, on page 119. In what other ways do people sometimes act like mules?

A cougar's leap is compared to that of a hooked fish on p. 76. What other animal might leap in this way?

Write other sentences in which a person did something like an animal, or in which one animal acted like another.

IV. Notice the method Marguerite Henry uses (metaphor or simile) to show us that the wind and the rain are sometimes wild, angry forces. In the chapter "Within the Black Tunnel" (p. 89) occurs an excellent example, as the wind and rain batter Brighty. In the following chapter, "Caged over the Colorado," the river and the wind (p. 92-93) seem to be in league against Brighty.

The children might write the story of another wild or tame animal or a person caught in a storm, telling where it was going when the storm occurred. The storm could be a hard rain, hail storm, dust storm, tornado, or blizzard.

A technique which sometimes proves interesting is to stop in the middle of a simile in a passage being read and to suggest that the children complete the sentence before hearing the author's ending. In the chapter "Caged over the Colorado," we find, "Below him he saw the river heaving boulders from its bed, grinding and crashing them together, and tossing along whole trees with roots upturned like . . . ." Children in one class supplied the following endings:

"an umbrella without the cover"
"a pitchfork"
"a giant's fingers."

They then heard Marguerite Henry's simile which likened the roots to "bony arms waving for help."

Language Explorations

I. Diction

A. One of the chapters of Brighty of the Grand Canyon is entitled "Blue-Flecked Rocks." How can we rearrange these words but keep the same meaning? (The Rocks with Blue Flecks) Which title has fewer words? Which do you prefer?

B. Marguerite Henry uses many expressions connected with hyphens. List phrases containing hyphenated words, then have the students try to say each in a different way, without changing the meaning.

"A ring-tailed cat leaped upon the rock." (p. 21)
(A cat with a ring on its tail leaped upon the rock.)
"sharp-edged stone." "broad-fingered hands." (p. 23)
"'Twas only a broken-off lump." (p. 25)
"Uncle Jimmy Owen was a small-sized man." (p. 33)
"Brighty stood sleepy-eyed . . . . " (p. 39)
"Look, Joe!" the red-bearded man laughed. (p. 45)
"dark evergreens and white-trunked aspen" (p. 54)

C. Rewrite the following sentences using hyphenated words:

a. I like to write with a pencil with a sharp point.
b. The little girl with eyes of blue was wearing a pink dress.

c. That day he wore his boots with high tops.
d. The little children thought that the Easter eggs had been brought by a bunny with long ears and a fluffy tail.
e. The baby with the round face smiled at me.
f. The man and the donkey made a pair that looked strange.
g. The salesman who talked fast soon sold the car.
h. No one could guess the name of the little man with the long nose

Which way of writing each sentence do you prefer? Is only one way "correct," or are both ways all right to use?

II. Phonology

The preceding exercise might be followed with one on the stress patterns of the groups of words which were transformed. The children should notice that in these groups the word following the hyphenated word is stressed.
Examples are:

ring-tailed cat'
sharp-edged stone'
broad-fingered hands'
broken-off lump'
small-sized man'
sleepy-eyed Brighty'
red-bearded man'
white-trunked aspen'

The children may list others and mark them to show stress.

III. Vocabulary

Occasionally vocabulary might be reviewed by use of a list and an exercise such as the following. These are intended to be used after the chapter entitled "Caged over the Colorado." The number of words or the difficulty of the words may be varied according to the ability of the group.

tremendous
umber
Indian paintbrush
conviction
desperation
batter
babble
vise
vast
grapple
pummel
captive
grotto
mesa
immense
savior
drench
lupine
abyss
cautious

1. Which two words are names of flowers?_______, _______

2. Which three mean "very large"?_______, _______, _______

3. Which two mean "to beat"?_______________, _______________

4. Which means "a bottomless gulf" or "deep immeasurable space"?

____

5. Which is a place where Brighty went for shelter?_____________
Write a synonym for it._________________(not in the list)

6. What might a hard rain do to you?___________________________

7. Which is a color?____________ What color is it like?__________

8. Which means "to chatter"?_________________________________

9. Which is a strong belief?____________________________________

10. Which word might be used to describe someone who was trying to avoid danger?____

11. What might someone do in a fight?___________________________

12. Which word refers to one who has been captured?____________

13. Which is a kind of land found in much of the southwestern part of the United States?______________________________________

14. Which is a device for holding?________________________________

15. What sort of feeling might a person have if he were held prisoner in a place from which he could not escape?________________

16. Which word means "one who saves"?________________________

IV. Dialect

The sections of this story that contain the speech of Uncle Jim and the Old Timer provide an excellent opportunity to study dialect. The students might like to try imitating their speech. They should be encouraged to listen to people of other countries or of other sections of this country on radio and TV to note various dialects. It might be possible to obtain some recordings or tapes to help study dialect. (The Uncle Remus stories would be an enjoyable tool for the study of at least one dialect.)

Old Timer's dialect might be pointed out and compared with forms the children use. Children might tell how they would phrase a number of the speeches of the Old Timer.

V. History of Language

The children might like to find substitute words for:

burro (Spanish)
sheriff (Anglo-Saxon)
mesa (Spanish)
corral (Spanish)
canyon (Spanish)
coyote (Mexican Indian)
mesquite (Mexican Indian)

The teacher could list the following words, and ask the students to match them:

flat-topped mountain
small donkey
enclosure for animals
desert shrub
(etc.)

Children enjoy discovering the origins of interesting words in an unabridged or good desk level dictionary. Students might be asked to place Spanish, Anglo-Saxon, and Indian words in their respective language families.

Extended Activities

I. A closely related record is Columbia Record CL1622--The Lure of the Grand Canyon by Ferde Grofé, Andre Kostelanetz and His Orchestra, with Johnny Cash in Spoken Commentary.

II. Children may wish to make reports on other stories by Marguerite Henry and to compare plots and motifs.

POETRY:

WALTZING MATILDA
(Australian Folk Song)

Once a wily swagman[1] rested by a billabong[2]
All in the shade of a coolibah tree
And he sang as he sat and watched until his billy boiled,
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda[3] with me!"
Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda,
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!
And he sang as he sat and watched until his billy boiled,
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!"

Then appeared a jumbuck[4] drinking at the billabong,
Quick moved the swagman and grabbed him with glee,
Whistled he to himself, with that jumbuck in his tuckerbag,
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!"
Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda,
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!
Whistled he to himself, with that jumbuck in his tuckerbag,
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!"

Then he looked up and looked into a rifle's mouth,
Found he was surrounded by troopers three:
"Give up that jumbuck tied inside your tuckerbag!
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!"
Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda,
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!
"Give up that jumbuck tied inside your tuckerbag!
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!"

Out the wily swagman dived into the billabong,
"You'll never take me alive," cried he.
Now still may be heard, in the breezes off that billabong,
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!"
Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda,
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!
Now still may be heard, in the breezes off that billabong,
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!"

---

[1] Tramp

[2] water hole

[3] tramping from place to place carrying swag, i.e., bundle containing what could be stolen or begged

[4] sheep

(Children will enjoy considering this song as an example of dialect. A consideration of a song in a dialect different from the Old Timer's dialect will help to prevent the children's acceptance of a false notion that all dialects are alike.)

William Blake, "Laughing Song" *Golden Treasury of Poetry*
(This poem exudes a joy of living, a sense of gaiety and freedom similar to that that Brighty finds so necessary. The students may notice the sympathy between nature and man that is suggested ["The green hill laughs"] in much the same way that nature in the story for the unit reflects danger, joy, etc.)

Kathryn and Byron Jackson, "Noonday Sun" *Time for Poetry*
(Noonday Sun was a colt stolen by outlaws. Children might consider the melodramatic suggestions of the poem as compared to the plot of *Brighty of the Grand Canyon*, but they will more quickly ascertain the tone of lament for a lost freedom and companionship.)

"Get Up and Bar the Door" *Golden Treasury of Poetry*
(As the class studies dialect they will enjoy this old joke from English folklore. Without some consideration of the language, the joke would be unintelligible to many children.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

For the Teacher

Jean Malmstrom and Annabel Ashley, *Dialects--USA* (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963).

For the Student

Many students would enjoy reading for themselves other stories by Marguerite Henry. All of the following books also contain illustrations by Wesley Dennis.

Born to Trot (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1950).

Misty of Chincoteague (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1947).

King of the Wind (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1948).

Sea Star: Orphan of Chincoteague (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1949).

Unit 37: Adventure Story:

HOMER PRICE

ADVENTURE STORY:
HOMER PRICE

CORE TEXT:

Robert McCloskey, Homer Price (New York: The Viking Press, 1949).

ALTERNATE TEXT:

Beverly Cleary, Henry Huggins (New York: William Morrow, 1950). Each chapter is a complete adventure, both humorous and suspenseful.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

Homer Price is a modern adventure story with episodes that vary from modernized versions of old folk tales to teen age detection to comic book debunking. The stories are all set in the town of Centerburg, a play on Chaucer's Canterbury, though a play not pushed too far. Homer himself in the first illustration of the book has put his head on the bust of the classical Homer. However, the literary allusions in the book seem decorative and not integral.

The allusions to the Canterbury Tales and to the Odyssey (Uncles Ulysses and Telemachus as well as Homer himself with cotton in his ears) are perhaps a hint as to the structure of the book. Homer may be a modern Ulysses, but instead of traveling about the world or going on a pilgrimage, the world comes to Homer's Centerburg. Five of the six episodes deal with people who come to Centerburg, eventually to meet with Homer (the robbers, Super-Duper, Miss Enders, and Michael Murphy).

The objectives of this unit are (1) to make the student aware of the difference between fabulous adventures and plausible adventures; (2) to extend the student's understanding of adventure stories by giving more attention to the plot pattern; (3) to suggest what lines a modern epic might take; and (4) to give the students a fantastic, but amusing story.

The unit on Homer Price is related to the other adventure stories, especially those that tend to be episodic, such as Mr. Popper's Penguins, Grade 3; Robin Hood, Grade 5; and The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Grade 6. It also leads to the Grade 9 unit, The Epic: The Odyssey as well as the four Grade 8 units on the hero.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER:

Author

Robert McCloskey is famous as an illustrator as well as a writer. His Make Way for Ducklings and Time of Wonder are Caldecott Award winners. He has also illustrated books written by other authors. Readers of Homer Price may be glad to know that Homer's adventures do not end there: Centerburg Tales continues the story of Homer Price. Other books written by McCloskey are Lentil, Blueberries For Sal, and One Morning in Maine.

Genre

Since ancient times, tales of fabulous adventure have been very popular with all sorts of audiences: the epic, such as the Odyssey and the Aeneid: the medieval romance, such as the stories of Robin Hood and King Arthur; the eighteenth century adventure novel, such as Robinson Crusoe or the more satiric Gulliver's Travels. Certain folk tales also dealt with adventure: for instance, Perrault's Puss in Boots and Grimm's Thumbling. The present-day children's adventure story often centers around boys and girls in everyday surroundings who become involved in humorous predicaments.

McCloskey uses the epic form, coupled with his child folk hero, for occasional satire. The college-educated robber advises the others not to shoot Aroma, saying, "It might attract the sheriff, and besides it isn't the accepted thing to do to Musteline Mammals." And Super-Duper, "tougher than steel," cries "OUCH!" when caught on a barbed wire fence. The duplication of the houses and the obstinacy of the doughnut machine are two other instances of McCloskey's poking fun.

Structure

Homer Price is divided into several episodes, each complete in itself. In each, Homer is an ordinary boy doing ordinary things until he becomes involved in some incredible happening. Centerburg is a very commonplace sort of town in which life goes along at an easy pace until some unusual event creates a fervor. As in the lives of children, in this town time seems to stand still. The action all takes place in the present, and one is not asked to create a past or project a future. Each episode in the story parallels the other episodes in that

1. Each story begins in a "normal situation."
2. Each story quickly moves to a fabulous adventure.
3. Homer quickly becomes a central figure and the hero of the adventure.

4. The adventures are so preposterous that they are almost believable.
5. Each episode has a satisfactory ending.

Homer, in each story, starts in his own normal surroundings in Centerburg. But every time he gets involved in intricate, exaggerated happenings that go on and on until a climax occurs. This should give the teacher an opportunity to discuss the fact that after a story reached the most exciting part, it suddenly relaxes and seems to slide down to the end.

Introduction ⟶ Climax ⟶ Quick Conclusion

Character

With the stories complete in themselves, we would expect that Homer would emerge as a fairly full figure at the end. But he is no different from what he is at the beginning. What has happened is that each story has focused attention on a plot situation or perhaps on some character other than Homer. Homer is the link from story to story, but he is not crucial except in Chapters I and III. The other characters are differentiated by their eccentricity, by being "characters." They are characterized by speech (the sheriff), by dress (Michael Murphy), by behavior (Uncle Ulysses' laziness), or by attribution (Miss Enders' money and her ancestors). There are some instances of more subtle characterization, but McCloskey does not rely on subtlety to get his story across.

Style

McCloskey uses peculiarities of speech to establish his characters. The Sheriff with his spoonerisms, Mr. Gabby with his "Ya know what I mean," and the one robber with his "educated" speech are several examples. The story, however, is a straightforward one, with a lot of dialogue to keep it moving at a fast pace.

Motif

With each episode Homer is faced with some situation that presents a problem. Sometimes there are fairly definite bounds to the problem (the robbers and the doughnuts), but more often the story seems to move from one locale to another where several new events unfold and a few new characters are unveiled. The events happen around Homer much more than to Homer.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

Literature Presentation

I. The book needs very little introduction, but the children might be led to understand that the book is "episodic," with little necessary narrative relationship between episodes. This kind of structure will allow a relatively leisurely pace without interrupting the students' sense of the "story."

II. Each episode in Homer Price is brief and self-contained enough to be treated completely in one session. The length of time between sessions is not particularly important, although the reading of the core text should not be extended over such a length of time that the central concept of a series of episodes unified by the presence of a single hero is lost. The concept of unity in episodes, achieved by the action and development of a hero, is important to the series of adventure units in the elementary grades in building toward an understanding of the epic and the episodic novel. (Before reading Chapter V to the class, the teacher should be certain that the children can identify Rip Van Winkle and the Pied Piper.)

III. Discussion

A. How do the robbers find out about the possible holdup? Why doesn't Homer's mother ever find the skunk in his room? Why doesn't Homer report the robbery sooner? Why is the Sheriff so unwilling to do anything with the robbers? What trick does the author have in the chapter title?

B. Who is the Super-Duper a spoof of? Again, what trick is there in the title of this chapter?

C. Why are the men in town so lazy (the Sheriff, Homer's uncles)? Should Uncle Ulysses have left Homer with the store? Why didn't Homer just weigh all the doughnuts to find the bracelet?

D. How does Miss Terwilliger manage to win the contest? Does Homer figure more or less in this episode than in the others? What trick is there in this chapter title (a pun)?

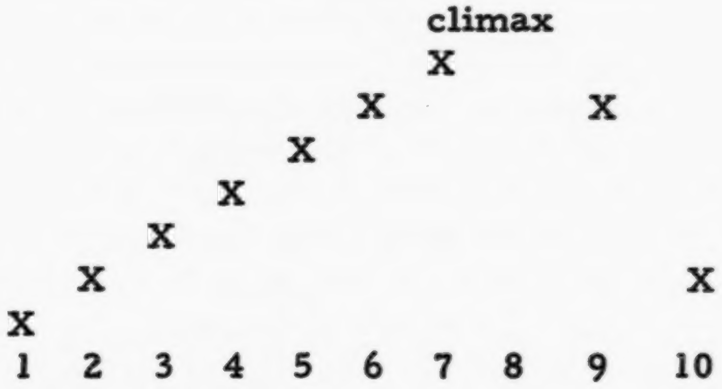
E. Why is the stranger so shy? Where does he get his money for supplies? Is he right about people needing better mousetraps? Are animals ever attracted by music? Was the Sheriff right to charge for a license?

F. What is Patent Medicine? Was Uncle Ulysses' idea for house building a good one? Should Dulcey have been allowed to put up the signs?

Composition Activities

I. As an oral composition exercise intended to illustrate to children the structure of the rising action of a typical "adventure" story, ask the children to work together to make up some stories. They might begin by discussing "suspense" and the incidents or elements in a particular episode from *Homer Price* which serve to build up the feeling of "suspense." (They might discover in their discussion that much of the suspense generated in the later episodes is a result of their expecting the same sort of humorous resolution that they have observed in previous episodes.)

It might help the children to understand the structure of such a story by arranging one of the episodes of *Homer Price* (perhaps the easiest and most popular episode for this purpose would be the one about the doughnut machine) according to a diagram, numbering the incidents or elements that tend to build suspense.



II. After the class has succeeded in analyzing an episode from *Homer Price* in this fashion, they might enjoy attempting as a class to build their own story. Start the children out by furnishing them with a skeleton set of characters and a basic situation. For example, have them start with an ordinary boy named Billy, ten years old, who is visiting an uncle who lives near the oceanside city of Smithsville. The uncle's home is a big old house near a very high steep cliff overlooking the beach. The children could build the story from there, either by working together through the story or by having specific children assigned to invent each element to build up suspense through the story.

III. Ask the children to write the story of another adventure that Homer Price might have had. Suggest that they write what might have happened if:

A. Little Louis got lost and Homer was helping Freddy look for him.
B. Prizes were being given at the Center County Fair for the most unusual "thingamajig" invented by a boy.
C. Freddy told Homer that he was going to try to develop muscles like the Super-Duper's.

IV. Some of the children might enjoy writing stories with themselves as heroes, parallel to one of the episodes in Homer Price. One good way for them to begin would be to recall something that actually happened to them, and then to add humor by exaggerating the situation and the incidents involved. They could try to build suspense through a series of incidents after the fashion of the first composition exercise.

Language Explorations

I. Diction (Dialect)

A. Ask the children which character had the most unusual and most humorous speech. Lead to a discussion of the Sheriff. Reread several of the phonemic inversions (e. g., "robio raiders" for "radio robbers"). Write several on the chalk board. Help the children to recall times they have spoken this way. Allow them to converse somewhat in this way.

B. Compare the "educated" robber's speech with that of the others. Ask such questions as:

1. How did the second robber describe the skunk in the suitcase of money? ("Look at that thing in our money.")
2. How did the "educated" robber describe it? ("That, my dear friend, is not a thing. It is a Musteline Mammal [Genus Mephitis] commonly known as a skunk!"
3. How do you usually speak to your pets? How might you tell someone about one of your mother's house plants? Can you use a dictionary, encyclopedia, science book, or seed catalogue to help you to say the same thing in a more "educated" way?

II. Vocabulary

Establish a background for names of main characters (e. g., Homer, a Greek poet; Ulysses, a Greek hero; Telemachus, the son of Ulysses).

III. Syntax

In order to develop a sense of the variety of proper sentence formations, build exercises like the following.

A. Write a scrambled sentence on the board using an idea from the story, for example:
   suitcase slept on a skunk brown and white a black
B. As a group, rearrange the words to make as many sentences as possible, for example:
   A black and white skunk slept on a brown suitcase. On a brown suitcase slept a black and white skunk.
C. Note that not all arrangements make good sentences, for example:
   Slept a black and white skunk on a brown suitcase.

Extended Activities

It is possible that quite a number of the children might like to read for themselves the alternate text, Henry Huggins. If a sufficient number of students do so, a brief discussion comparing the two books might be useful:

A. How were Homer and Henry alike? (Each had one exciting adventure after another. Each was able to find his way out of many predicaments.)
B. What words might be used to tell about both boys? (Clever, inventive, quick-thinking, helpful, friendly, good-natured.)
C. Which of their adventures were similar?

   1. Both acquired pets rather accidentally. Henry's finding Ribsy may be compared to Homer's finding Aroma.
   2. Each had an adventure in which there was an over-production problem. Henry raised more guppies than he could care for. Homer had to find a way to dispose of too many doughnuts.
   3. There were unforeseen happenings in connection with both the Christmas play in which Henry participated and the Centerburg Pageant in which Homer had a part.

D. What words might be used to describe the happenings in both books? (Exciting, unusual, humorous, improbable, exaggerated.)
E. Which happenings seemed funniest to you?
F. What makes these stories humorous? (Boys and girls in them are like the boys and girls we know. But they find themselves in many unusual situations and they solve their problems in

unexpected ways. No one is really hurt by the strange things the people do, so the stories are funny to us.)

POETRY:

Hilaire Belloc, "George Who Played with a Dangerous Toy, and Suffered a Catastrophe of Considerable Dimensions" Golden Treasury of Poetry

(This poem, as one can judge from the title itself, expands from a rather simple beginning to a fantastically exaggerated situation in much the same fashion as most of the episodes in Homer Price.)

Guy Wetmore Carryl, "The Gastronomic Guile of Simple Simon" Golden Treasury of Poetry

(The humor of this poem rests upon the "rewriting of a familiar nursery rhyme in an "expanded" style. Besides being enjoyable, it could serve in conjunction with the study of the speech of the "educated" robber in a study of the devices and effects of variants in dialect.)

Robert Browning, "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix" Golden Treasury of Poetry

(The stirring rhythm of this well-known poem could easily suggest another way to write of adventure. The incident that is narrated in the poem is never explained, although many of the apparently insignificant details of the ride and the gear are listed exhaustively. The high drama of the poem is created and sustained in great part by the strong rhythms of the poem, suggestive of the galloping of a horse. Yet the suspense in the poem builds up in steps that the students can identify just as they can identify the exaggerated steps of an episode from Homer Price.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Beverly Creary, Ellen Tebbits (New York: William Morrow, 1951). Ellen is a female counterpart of Henry Huggins.

Elizabeth Enright, Melendy Family (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.).

Combined in this one volume are the adventures of the four Melendy children, which are in turn from Then There Were Five (1944), The Saturdays (1941), and The Four-Story Mistake (1942).

Lucretia P. Hale, The Complete Peterkin Papers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924).
The impractical Peterkins find themselves in many absurd situations.

Unit 38: Myth:

HIAWATHA'S FASTING

THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR

ARACHNE

PHAETON AND THE CHARIOT OF THE SUN

MYTH:
HIAWATHA'S FASTING
THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR
ARACHNE
PHAETON AND THE CHARIOT OF THE SUN

CORE TEXTS:

"Hiawatha's Fasting"
--from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, The Song of Hiawatha, Canto V (Selection reprinted in this packet)

"Theseus and the Minotaur"
"Arachne"
--from Rex Warner, Men and Gods (New York: Random House, Inc., 1959).

"Phaeton and the Chariot of the Sun"
--from Margaret Evans Price, Myths and Enchantment Tales (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1960).

* * *

HIAWATHA'S FASTING
by
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

You shall hear how Hiawatha
Prayed and fasted in the forest,
Not for greater skill in hunting,
Not for greater craft in fishing,
Not for triumphs in the battle,
And renown among the warriors,
But for profit of the people,
For advantage of the nations.
First he built a lodge for fasting,
Built a wigwam in the forest,
By the shining Big-Sea-Water,
In the blithe and pleasant Spring-time,
In the Moon of Leaves he built it,
And, with dreams and visions many,
Seven whole days and nights he fasted.
On the first day of his fasting
Through the leafy woods he wandered;
Saw the deer start from the thicket,
Saw the rabbit in his burrow,

Heard the pheasant, Bena, drumming,
Heard the squirrel, Adjidaumo,
Rattling in his hoard of acorns,
Saw the pigeon, the Omeme,
Building nests among the pine-trees,
And in flocks the wild-goose, Wawa,
Flying to the fen-lands northward,
Whirring, wailing far above him.
"Master of Life!" he cried, desponding,
"Must our lives depend on these things?"
On the next day of his fasting
By the river's brink he wandered,
Through the Muskoday, the meadow,
Saw the wild rice, Mahnomonee,
Saw the blueberry, Meenahga,
And the strawberry, Odahmin,
And the gooseberry, Shahbomin,
And the grape-vine, the Bemahgut,
Trailing o'er the alder-branches,
Filling all the air with fragrance!
"Master of Life!" he cried, desponding,
"Must our lives depend on these things?"
On the third day of his fasting
By the lake he sat and pondered,
By the still, transparent water;
Saw the sturgeon, Nahma, leaping,
Scattering drops like beads of wampum,
Saw the yellow perch, the Sahwa,
Like a sunbeam in the water,
Saw the pike, the Maskenozha,
And the herring, Okahahwis,
And the Shawgashee, the craw-fish!
"Master of Life!" he cried, desponding,
"Must our lives depend on these things?"
On the fourth day of his fasting
In his lodge he lay exhausted;
From his couch of leaves and branches
Gazing with half-open eyelids,
Full of shadowy dreams and visions,
On the dizzy, swimming landscape,
On the gleaming of the water,
On the splendor of the sunset.
And he saw a youth approaching,
Dressed in garments green and yellow
Coming through the purple twilight,
Through the splendor of the sunset;
Plumes of green bent o'er his forehead,

And his hair was soft and golden.
Standing at the open doorway,
Long he looked at Hiawatha,
Looked with pity and compassion
On his wasted form and features,
And, in accents like the sighing
Of the South-wind in the tree-tops,
Said he, "O my Hiawatha!
All your prayers are heard in heaven,
For you pray not like the others;
Not for greater skill in hunting,
Not for greater craft in fishing,
Not for triumph in the battle,
Nor renown among the warriors,
But for the profit of the people.
For advantage of the nations.
"From the Master of Life descending,
I, the friend of man, Mondamin,
Come to warn you and instruct you,
How by struggle and by labor
You shall gain what you have prayed for.
Rise up from your bed of branches,
Rise, O youth, and wrestle with me!"
Faint with famine, Hiawatha
Started from his bed of branches,
From the twilight of his wigwam
Forth into the flush of sunset
Came, and wrestled with Mondamin;
At his touch he felt new courage
Throbbing in his brain and bosom,
Felt new life and hope and vigor
Run through every nerve and fibre.
So they wrestled there together
In the glory of the sunset,
And the more they strove and struggled,
Stronger still grew Hiawatha;
Till the darkness fell around them,
And the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
From her nest among the pine-trees,
Gave a cry of lamentation,
Gave a scream of pain and famine.
"'T is enough!" then said Mondamin,
Smiling upon Hiawatha,
"But to-morrow, when the sun sets,
I will come again to try you."
And he vanished, and was seen not;
Whether sinking as the rain sinks,

Whether rising as the mists rise,
Hiawatha saw not, knew not,
Only saw that he had vanished,
Leaving him alone and fainting,
With the misty lake below him,
And the reeling stars above him.
On the morrow and the next day,
When the sun through heaven descending,
Like a red and burning cinder
From the hearth of the Great Spirit,
Fell into the western waters,
Came Mondamin for the trial,
For the strife with Hiawatha;
Came as silent as the dew comes,
From the empty air appearing,
Into empty air returning,
Taking shape when earth it touches,
But invisible to all men
In its coming and its going.
Thrice they wrestled there together
In the glory of the sunset,
Till the darkness fell around them,
Till the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
From her nest among the pine-trees,
Uttered her loud cry of famine,
And Mondamin paused to listen.
Tall and beautiful he stood there,
In his garments green and yellow;
To and fro his plumes above him
Waved and nodded with his breathing,
And the sweat of the encounter
Stood like drops of dew upon him.
And he cried, "O Hiawatha!
Bravely have you wrestled with me,
Thrice have wrestled stoutly with me,
And the Master of Life, who sees us,
He will give to you the triumph!"
Then he smiled, and said: "To-morrow
Is the last day of your conflict,
Is the last day of your fasting.
You will conquer and o'er come me;
Make a bed for me to lie in,
Where the rain may fall upon me,
Where the sun may come and warm me;
Strip these garments, green and yellow.
Strip this nodding plumage from me,
Lay me in the earth, and make it

Soft and loose and light above me.
"Let no hand disturb my slumber,
Let no weed nor worm molest me,
Let not Kahgahgee, the raven,
Come to haunt me and molest me,
Only come yourself to watch me,
Till I wake, and start, and quicken,
Till I leap into the sunshine."
And thus saying, he departed;
Peacefully slept Hiawatha,
But he heard the Wawonaissa,
Heard the whippoorwill complaining,
Perched upon his lonely wigwam;
Heard the rushing Sebowisha,
Heard the rivulet rippling near him,
Talking to the darksome forest;
Heard the sighing of the branches,
As they lifted and subsided
At the passing of the night-wind,
Heard them, as one hears in slumber
Far-off murmurs, dreamy whispers:
Peacefully slept Hiawatha.
On the morrow came Nokomis,
On the seventh day of his fasting,
Came with food for Hiawatha,
Came imploring and bewailing,
Lest his hunger should o'ercome him,
Lest his fasting should be fatal.
But he tasted not, and touched not,
Only said to her, "Nokomis,
Wait until the sun is setting,
Till the darkness falls around us,
Till the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
Crying from the desolate marshes,
Tells us that the day is ended."
Homeward weeping went Nokomis,
Sorrowing for her Hiawatha,
Fearing lest his strength should fail him,
Lest his fasting should be fatal.
He meanwhile sat weary waiting
For the coming of Mondamin,
Till the shadows, pointing eastward,
Lengthened over field and forest,
Till the sun dropped from the heaven,
Floating on the waters westward,
As a red leaf in the Autumn
Falls and floats upon the water,

Falls and sinks into its bosom.
And behold! the young Mondamin,
With his soft and shining tresses,
With his garments green and yellow,
With his long and glossy plumage,
Stood and beckoned at the doorway,
And as one in slumber walking,
Pale and haggard, but undaunted,
From the wigwam Hiawatha
Came and wrestled with Mondamin.
Round about him spun the landscape,
Sky and forest reeled together,
And his strong heart leaped within him,
As the sturgeon leaps and struggles
In a net to break its meshes.
Like a ring of fire around him
Blazed and flared the red horizon,
And a hundred suns seemed looking
At the combat of the wrestlers.
Suddenly upon the greensward
All alone stood Hiawatha,
Panting with his wild exertion,
Palpitating with the struggle;
And before him breathless, lifeless,
Lay the youth, with hair dishevelled,
Plumage torn, and garments tattered,
Dead he lay there in the sunset.
And victorious Hiawatha
Made the grave as he commanded,
Stripped the garments from Mondamin,
Stripped his tattered plumage from him,
Laid him in the earth, and made it
Soft and loose and light above him;
And the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
From the melancholy moorlands,
Gave a cry of lamentation,
Gave a cry of pain and anguish!
Homeward then went Hiawatha
To the lodge of old Nokomis,
And the seven days of his fasting
Were accomplished and completed.
But the place was not forgotten
Where he wrestled with Mondamin;
Nor forgotten nor neglected
Was the grave where lay Mondamin,
Sleeping in the rain and sunshine,
Where his scattered plumes and garments

Faded in the rain and sunshine.
Day by day did Hiawatha
Go to wait and watch beside it;
Kept the dark mould soft above it,
Kept it clean from weeds and insects,
Drove away, with scoffs and shoutings,
Kahgahgee, the king of ravens.
Till at length a small green feather
From the earth shot slowly upward,
Then another and another,
And before the Summer ended
Stood the maize in all its beauty,
With its shining robes about it,
And its long, soft, yellow tresses;
And in rapture Hiawatha
Cried aloud, "It is Mondamin!
Yes, the friend of man, Mondamin!"
Then he called to old Nokomis
And Iagoo, the great boaster,
Showed them where the maize was growing,
Told them of his wondrous vision,
Of his wrestling and his triumph,
Of this new gift to the nations,
Which should be their food forever.
And still later, when the Autumn
Changed the long, green leaves to yellow,
And the soft and juicy kernels
Grew like wampum hard and yellow,
Then the ripened ears he gathered,
Stripped the withered husks from off them,
As he once had stripped the wrestler,
Gave the first Feast of Mondamin,
And made known unto the people
This new gift of the Great Spirit.

--from The Poetical Works of
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
(Cambridge: The Riverside
Press, 1886).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

This unit includes the study of four myths (three Greek Myths and a literary version of an American Indian myth), which should help students toward a more thorough understanding of the nature of myth, an understanding extremely important to the more mature study of native Western literature. These myths, like the others that have been studied in previous units and those that will appear in succeeding units, are stories invented and used by people in the primitive stages of a culture to explain many of the natural and, as they believed, supernatural phenomena that they observed about them. All the stories in this unit should not be taught at one time; the abstractions of myths are difficult for elementary school children, and the experiences children have with them should be spread out over a period of time.

The objectives of this unit are (1) to help children understand that our culture is a result of the merging of the influences of a number of civilizations that have preceded ours; (2) to show relationships among various aspects of our culture; (3) to increase the children's understanding and enjoyment of good literature; and (4) to investigate some of the ways in which ancient men attempted to explain their environment.

Myths are a significant part of a child's literary heritage: they are essential to the growth of understanding of much of the great literature of the Western world. To enumerate all the units to which this unit relates would be to catalogue a large share of the literature curriculum. In fact, insofar as the stories of this unit express Greek moral idealism, the unit is related to the entire curriculum's consideration of literature as it expresses the corruption of the "good life" and as it presents essential moral and ethical precepts of our culture. The teacher should be familiar with the series of elementary units on the myth. The seventh grade series, Religious Story (Part I: Classical Myth; Part II: Hebrew Literature; Part III: American Indian Myth), furnishes a good deal of information that the teacher of even young children should have if she is to teach the myths with some fullness of understanding. "Hiawatha's Fasting" should be compared closely with the first grade unit on Indian nature myths, and "Theseus and the Minotaur" acts almost as a sequel to "Daedalus and Icarus," in the third grade unit. Especially because some of the stories are a part of the same Greek folk literature to which the fables of Aesop belong, this unit is closely related to the first, second, and fourth grade units on the fable.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER:

Genre

To begin the study of the myths in this unit, the class would do well to recall other myths, their general nature and their variations. Simply, myths are stories used by people of primitive cultures to explain their ideas about deities, the origin of the world they live in, and the workings of nature. The principal themes of myths are the creation of the earth, peoples, and creatures; the origin of seasons and constellations and other natural phenomena; and the origin of social or religious customs.

The myths of many primitive groups are amazingly similar although the cultures may be far apart in time and place. Indian, Norse, Japanese, and Greek myths are original with the culture, but the Roman myths were in a large part borrowed from the Greeks and superimposed on the Roman culture. In all these bodies of mythology, the myths are attempts to explain the environment of the people. It was only natural that the myth-makers used the things they could see--the sun, the moon, the stars, the wind, the sea, plants, animals, etc.--to symbolize the forces they believed operated to make things happen to them. The people in primitive cultures generally accepted the literal truth of their mythology, frequently developing it into an organized body of religion. By the time the students have progressed through the study of myths in the first three grades, they will have a fairly good notion of the characteristics of myths that we have mentioned here. They should be able to apply their knowledge quite easily to the stories included in this unit.

Structure

Among the simplest kinds of myths are the "pourquoi" stories, the "why" stories, explaining how the world got as it is. There are a great many of these stories in the mythology of the American Indian; and, since they are the simplest kind of myths, two of these charming stories formed the introduction to the units on mythology. These nature myths are especially good for giving children experience with mythology, because they deal with everyday things in the children's world. They give very simply the concept that a myth is man's attempt to explain things in the world about him. "Hiawatha's Fasting" is much more complex, but it resembles those stories in its general conceptions. In some way all the stories in this unit serve as "pourquoi" stories, explaining the origin of one thing or another in the world of nature or the world of men. "Hiawatha's Fasting" describes the Great Spirit's gift of maize (Indian corn) to his people. "Theseus and the Minotaur" is part of a much longer story that relates the origins of other things; it tells of the origin of the name of the "Aegean" Sea, named after Theseus' father who tragically plunged himself into the sea and died. "Arachne" of course explains the origin of the first spider; and Phaeton's disastrous ride explains the sunrise and sunset, the movements of the heavenly bodies, the origin of the Ethiopian's black skin (compare with Kipling's "How the Leopard Got His Spots," third grade "animal stories" unit), the origin of the Sahara Desert, and the hidden source of the Nile River.

One discovers in these myths, too, the common structural patterns of the folk tale. Hiawatha, Theseus, and Phaeton all journey in isolation into a "wilderness" and encounter a "monster." Through courage and strength, Hiawatha and Theseus conquer the monsters they face and bring security to their people; Phaeton, on the other hand, is destroyed because he is not capable of controlling the situation into which he imprudently thrusts himself. Phaeton, like Icarus, must face the consequences of attempting to "soar too high," of attempting to be too much like the gods. The meeting with the "monster" becomes a kind of contest, a motif which forms the basis for the myth of "Arachne." The stories of Arachne and Phaeton, furthermore, resemble the conflict between the wise beast and the foolish beast so often central to fables. Arachne and Phaeton both suffer terrible fates because of their foolish, imprudent behavior.

Character

As the children read and compare the stories in this unit, recalling other myths that they have studied previously, they may be conscious of the differences between the conceptions of the Great Spirit that they find in the Indian myths and the conceptions of the gods in the Greek myths. In the first grade unit, the two Indian myths showed both sides of the divine generally presented in mythology--in "The Story of the First Woodpecker," the Great Spirit appeared as the stern judge demanding deference to his laws and desires; in "The Story of the First Butterflies," the Great Spirit appeared as the loving creator, full of consideration and care for his human children. In the story of "Hiawatha's Fasting," one can discover vestiges of both conceptions, but although the Great Spirit tests Hiawatha to see if man is worthy of his great beneficence, the divine is presented as concerned with the welfare of his children and he is above all revealed as a giver of gifts. The conception of the gods in the Greek myths is somewhat different. It is true that the Greeks presented the gods as concerned with human beings and human society--the gods help heroes to perform their beneficial feats; but it is also true that in the Greek myths the gods are much more concerned with themselves than they are with man. They demand that men recognize the superiority of the gods and that men not attempt to usurp the dominions of power that belong to the gods. In their dealings with men and with each other, the Greek gods exhibit human characteristics; they are subject to human emotions--anger, jealousy, pride, sorrow, etc. The pleasures they sought were the sensual pleasures known to men--the delights of food, drink, love--and the pleasures of power, glory and wealth. In "Hiawatha's Fasting," Longfellow's divine being plans incidents carefully, with foreknowledge of the outcome, to fit the actions of men into a carefully controlled master plan. In the Greek myths, the gods plot and scheme, in attempts to fulfill their own desires, with little more foreknowledge than the human beings they deal with.

Most of the human characters in myths are "flat," but the "flatness" is frequently designed so that the characters can be more clearly identified as symbols rather than as individuals. Both Hiawatha and Theseus in the stories for this unit attain epic stature as heroes. Both Hiawatha and Theseus, serving as representatives of an entire culture in performing their heroic functions, are mortal men; but they are capable of more than mortal vision and more than mortal abilities. They are aware that they are representatives, that the welfare of their society rests upon their shoulders, and that they must prepare themselves and accept the responsibility that falls to them. In fulfilling their functions, they act in league with supernatural powers: no ordinary man, even with the help of a beautiful woman, could save his people by conquering such a monster as the minotaur. Heroes need the help of the divine: Hiawatha, weakened by fasting, magically drew strength from his opponent. It is not difficult to understand how legends of heroes grew up in ancient cultures in order to explain the mysteries of the universe; neither is it difficult to understand why it is that these ancient legends assign magical powers to their heroes. Such heroes as Hiawatha and Theseus, although they are not divine themselves, certainly act as human instruments carrying out divine plans.

Theme

The hero must first of all learn of his role as the leader of his society and then he must prove his worthiness to perform that role. To attain a hero's epic stature, to fulfill his special role in society in the epic pattern, he must undergo tests of his worthiness, temptations to abandon his role, and finally a contest which establishes the divine plan in the society of men. Both the test of worthiness and the feat of heroism can be painful. Hiawatha makes a great personal sacrifice in order to gain the gift of corn for his people: the long fast, the temptation to break the fast, the wrestling contest with Mondamin. Theseus too must face great danger to deliver his people from the evil that threatens them.

In contrast to these two myths celebrating the feats of "epic" heroes, the stories of Arachne and Phaeton contain "lessons" warning men of foolish behavior. Arachne and Phaeton are both punished for their foolish presumption of superiority over the gods. These two myths resemble the fable in that their plots demonstrate "lessons"; where the fable dramatizes the foolishness of immoral behavior, the wisdom of virtue and the proper relationship of man to man, these myths dramatize the foolishness of pride and the wisdom of man's recognizing the proper spiritual relationship between himself and his gods.

Style

Longfellow's version of "Hiawatha's Fasting" that is contained in this unit is one of the few occasions that poetry is the form of a core selection in an elementary unit. Consequently, the teacher should capitalize on the opportunity to investigate the differences between poetry and prose. This poem is most distinctive in its peculiar rhythm, imitative of the rhythm of Indian chants. At the same time, the children can be brought to understand that the techniques of narrative poetry are surprisingly similar to the narrative techniques of prose. The story is full of incremental repetition; in folk tale style, things tend to happen in threes--Hiawatha's lament, "Must our lives depend on these things," is repeated three times; the wrestling match takes place in three stages, etc. The poem frequently contains two or three lines together that begin in exactly the same way (for example: "Not for greater skill . . ., Not for greater craft . . . , Not for triumphs . . . ").

The style of the other myths in the unit is similar to the style of other classical myths the students have read. The stories are most concerned with the telling of the incidents of the plot, but there are images and figurative devices presented in some descriptions that capture the grandeur of the world when "the gods appeared on the earth." The children will especially enjoy the expansive, pre-scientific description of the cosmos contained in "Phaeton and the Chariot of the Sun."

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

Literature Presentation

I. "Hiawatha's Fasting"

A. This selection could be introduced as an American Indian nature myth, similar in some ways to the Indian nature myths that the children have encountered in the first grade unit on myth. The major difference that the children may note is that the human character in this story is of heroic stature. The conception of the Great Spirit is similar to that of the myths encountered earlier.

B. Excellent teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil rapport is necessary during the reading of this selection if the children are to understand and appreciate the story. In reading the poem, the teacher should take care not to let the rhythm become droning or monotonous. The teacher should read the story to the children; then answer any questions which may arise. Questions will probably lead to re-reading parts of the story. After the discussion, the story might be re-read as a whole; it should be made available for the children to read for themselves. (The teacher should read the myth until she is very familiar with it. There are Indian names for the wild creatures and the plants seen by Hiawatha during the long fast, and it is necessary that these be read with ease so as not to interrupt the continuity of thought.)

C. Discussion

1. Is this myth, like other Indian myths you have read, a myth of punishment, a myth attempting to explain something in nature, or is it something entirely different? (Bring out the idea of the reward to Hiawatha and his people for a great show of courage.)

2. What are some acts of courage in our modern world?

3. What are some problems you have "wrestled with" and won? What was your reward?

II. "Theseus and the Minotaur"

A. As an introduction to this myth and the other Greek myths of this unit, present some background information to the students about the culture of the ancient Greeks. Fourth grade children should be ready to learn something of that classical ancient world.

1. Early Greece (point out on a map) was composed of many parts--mainland and islands--and this explains why there were so many kings and queens in the stories.

2. The Greeks were a very religious and a highly civilized people. They built temples to worhsip their gods and goddesses. Some of these buildings are still in evidence. (Good pictures of Greek architecture may be shown and compared with types of architecture which the children have seen.)

3. In addition to the gods, there were those who had one human and one divine parent. These were demi-gods.

4. When the Romans conquered the Greeks they adopted much of the Greek culture. This explains why, in some myths, the same gods may have different names--one is Greek and the other Roman. Introduce this particular myth by explaining that part of the action of the story takes place in the labyrinth built by Daedalus in the story of "Daedalus and Icarus." The minotaur has also been mentioned previously. Theseus is like Hiawatha in that he overcame another of great strength, but the opponents were quite different.

B. This short myth could be presented in one sitting, the teacher reading it aloud. Very little explanation is needed because the background has already been established in the third grade unit. If the children did not have the third grade unit, "Daedalus and Icarus" should be studied before this selection.

C. Discussion topics might include the following:

1. In what ways do you think Theseus and Hiawatha were alike? In what ways different?

2. Does the minotaur seem to you to be just a monster, or could he represent something else?

III. "Arachne"

A. The arts of spinning and weaving are as old as the history of Man, and it is not surprising that they are involved in so many of the early classics. The story of the weaving "contest" between Arachne and Athena could impress children as being a most exciting myth. The plot contrasts with others in this unit, because the title character is a human being trying to compete with a goddess. With the help of the teacher, the children should see the parallel between this myth and the Indian myth of "The First Woodpecker." Both are stories of punishment and both explain the origin of a member of the animal world.

B. The story should be read aloud to the children, then made available for them to read by themselves when they wish.

C. Lead a discussion, directing the students toward a consideration of the similarities and dissimilarities between this story and the other stories in this unit; between this story and other myths in general; between this story and the students' general conception of the fable; between the actions of the gods in "Hiawatha's Fasting" and the gods in this story; etc. The students should discuss quite thoroughly the reasons that Arachne was punished.

IV. "Phaeton and the Chariot of the Sun"

A. In preparation for this myth, the teacher might discuss the fact that "Phaeton and the Chariot of the Sun" is another myth which depicts a son going against the wishes of his father. (Compare Grade 3, "Daedalus and Icarus.") A moral is indicated but not directly included in the story. Phaeton tricked his father into letting him drive the chariot, while Icarus was thoughtlessly disobedient.

B. This story should first be read aloud to the children and then made available for the students to read themselves.

C. The teacher might lead off a discussion of this myth with the following topics:

1. When Apollo knew that Phaeton couldn't handle the chariot, why did he allow him to try?

2. What do you think about the honor of keeping a promise? Should it be given without careful thought? Is it always binding?

Composition Activities

I. There are many descriptive elements included in the narrative of "Hiawatha's Fasting" although there are few passages of any length devoted entirely to description. The total effect of the descriptive elements achieves quite a vivid description of the natural surroundings in the story. The student might enjoy writing a paragraph or two describing Hiawatha's forest, or describing another forest as they may visualize it. They might note the kind of descriptive detail Longfellow included and attempt to select details themselves in order to form an accurate representation of their own vision.

II. Fourth grade children delight in the creation of monsters. Ask them to create, describe, name, and sketch an original monster. Then ask them to create, describe, name, and sketch a hero capable of overcoming the monster. Using the monster and hero that they have created, ask them to attempt to think of a situation in which the monster threatens the safety or happiness of the hero or of the people the hero protects. They can then write their own myths about how the hero overcomes the threat or threats posed by the monster.

III. The students may or may not have discovered in their discussions that the myths in this unit tend to be of two types: one in which the hero works out, as a representative of a people, a destiny that has already been assigned to him by a god or gods, although the god's foreknowledge does not unduly influence the man's free will; and the other in which a human being is punished for pride, or presumption, attempting to be too much like the gods (in Greek culture, the major sin--hubris, or hybris). The students will certainly not discuss the difference in these terms; but if it can be seen that they have begun to notice and to discuss this kind of difference in the myths, they might attempt to rewrite one kind of myth as another kind. For example, they might try to imagine how the story would have been different, what might have happened to Hiawatha and his people, if Hiawatha had suddenly decided that, by virtue of defeating Mondamin in the wrestling match, he were equal to or superior to the Great Spirit. Or they might try to imagine how the story of Phaeton would be different if Phaeton were a hero like Hiawatha or Theseus. How would his journey have been different?

Language Explorations

I. History of Language

Have the students find the origins of the following words from stories in the unit in a good dictionary (the following answers are from *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*):

A.	maize	[Sp *maiz*, fr. Taino *mahiz*, *mays*]
B.	myrtle	[ME *mirtille*, fr. MF *mirtille*, *myrtille*, fr. ML *myrtillus*, fr. L *myrtus*, *murtus*, fr. Gk *myrtos*, prob. of Sem origin]
C.	arachnid	[NL & Gk; NL, fr. Gk. fr. *arachne*; perh. akin to L *aranea* spider, Gk *arkys* net]
D.	nymph	[ME *nimphe*, fr. MF, *nymph*, fr. L *nympha* bride, *nymph*, fr. Gk *nymphe*]
E.	skeins	[ME *skeyne*, *skayne*, fr. MF *escaigne*]
F.	shuttles	[ME *schutylle*, *schetylle*, *shittle*, prob. fr. OE *scytel*, *scytels* bar, bolt; akin to ON *skutill* bar, bolt, Dan *skyttel* shuttle, OE *sceotan* to shoot]
G.	trident	[L *trident-*, *tridens*, fr. *tri-* (three) + *dent-*, *dens* tooth]
H.	spindle	[ME *spindel*, fr. OE *spinel*; akin to OFris *spindel* spindle, OE *spinnan* to spin]
I.	phaeton	[L *Phaethon*, son of Helios who attempted to drive the chariot of the sun with the result of setting the earth on fire, fr. Gk *Phaethon*] (The students know this, of course, so they will be more concerned with the modern meaning of the word:) 2 : any of various light four-wheeled horse-drawn vehicles usu. having no sidepieces in front of the seats 3 : TOURING CAR.
J.	zodiac	[ME, fr. MF *zodiaque*, fr. L *zodiacus*, fr. Gk *zōidiakos*, adj., of carved or painted figures, of the zodiac, fr. *zōidion* carved or painted figure, sign of the zodiac, akin to Gk zōe life]

K. vulcanize [after Vulcan, ancient Roman god of fire and metalworking]

II. Diction

Take this quotation and re-write it as your parents might say it to you:

"Now look round on all the riches that the world contains, and from all the good things of earth and sky and sea ask something for yourself . . . But, I beg you, be more sensible about what you want."

III. Syntax

Make these sentences more interesting by expanding them:

1. Phaeton drove the chariot.
2. The thunderbolt struck Phaeton.
3. Would you like to meet a minotaur?
4. The labyrinth was long.
5. Read to me about Arachne.
6. The Sahara Desert is hot.
7. Do you enjoy stories?
8. Theseus was brave.

Extended Activities

I. Look for additional information about the Nile River and the Sahara Desert.

II. Write on the chalk board the descriptive sentences about the colors used in the background of the fabric: " . . . purple of the oyster and every other dye, each shading into each, so that the eye could scarcely tell the difference in between the finer shades, though the extreme colors were clear enough. So . . . when a rainbow spans the sky, between each color there is a great difference, but still between each an insensible shading." Leave this passage on the board for several days and let the children try blending beautiful colors in colored pencil, pastels, or water color.

III. Look in the library for stories about the gods and goddesses whose stories were woven into the fabric of Arachne's tapestry.

POETRY:

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "A Musical Instrument" The Golden Treasury of Poetry

(This poem is a literary version of a simple creation myth in which the great god Pan, who appears as half-man, half-goat, "invents" the flute. The poem is remarkable for the musical quality of its verse, imitative of the musical "tradition" of Pan and his "pipe.")

Ella Young, "The Unicorn" Time for Poetry

(This little poem, notable for the delicacy of its rhythm, may inspire children to learn more of the legendary unicorn.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Anne Terry White, The Golden Treasury of Myths and Legends (New York: The Golden Press, 1959).

The teacher should have Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire's Book of Greek Myths (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1962) on her bookshelves; its text and exceptional illustrations are invaluable to the teaching of myth.

Unit 39: Fable:

THE FABLES OF AESOP

FABLE:
THE FABLES OF AESOP

CORE TEXT:

Joseph Jacobs (ed.), The Fables of Aesop, ill. by Kurt Wiese (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

In this unit, several Greek fables credited to the legendary Aesop are treated in a more intensive, analytical fashion than they are in the previous two units (first and second grade) on the fables of Aesop. Fables, brief narratives employing talking beasts and inanimate objects to point up moral or ethical implications of human action, have been used in a great variety of cultures for many centuries as tools for the moral instruction of the young.

Since the abstractions of fables are rather difficult for the very young to handle, the previous units on the fable introduce the form without dwelling on the moral applications, except incidentally and informally. In this unit, it is assumed that fourth grade children are ready to perceive the "moral of the story" as such. The units in the first two grades introduce the child to the common devices and patterns of the simplest fables. The third grade unit introduces stories that exhibit the use of those devices and patterns for literary purposes. This unit and the fifth grade unit on the fables of ancient India continue the study of the classical fable form, while the sixth grade unit culminates the series in a study of Kenneth Grahame's The Wind in the Willows, representative of the use of the fable in a humorous, satiric, allegorical representation of the good and the bad in modern society.

The objectives of this unit are (1) further to acquaint students with the characteristics of the fable, with considerable attention to the moral; (2) to strengthen the concept that human actions are frequently presented in literature by analogous animal actions; (3) to illustrate the mechanics of the fable as the dramatization of a concept, or "moral" lesson; and (4) to give the children an opportunity to construct their own fables by starting with the abstraction of the moral rather than with the specific animal as they have done in previous units.

Insofar as fables usually treat of animals acting with human characteristics, the unit is related to the great number of other elementary units containing stories which study animals for contrasting purposes. As the study of a form which characteristically uses the oblique perspective of satire, symbolism and allegory, the study of the fable points to other units concerned with levels of meaning and with simple symbolism (for example, the fifth grade unit on The Door in the Wall). Besides coordinating with a great number of other elementary units in an investigation of the varieties of literary forms, expressions, and meanings, this unit on the fable helps to form an important foundation for a number of more analytical secondary units: units which take up the satiric use of the fable (ninth and twelfth grade units on satire); units which take up more sophisticated Greek literature (seventh grade unit on the classical myth, ninth grade unit on the epic, and tenth grade unit on tragedy); and units which take up techniques for attacking secondary levels of meaning (Grade 7 units, The Making of Stories and the Meaning of Stories.

To the extent that the stories express Greek moral idealism, this unit relates to the entire curriculum's consideration of literature as a vehicle for expressing the corruptions of the nature of the good life and for expressing imaginatively the essential moral and ethical precepts of our culture. To see how closely these simple fables correspond to the basic standards of moral behavior in Western civilization, compare the qualities affirmed in these fables with those qualities which go to form The Noble Man in Western Culture, a central eighth grade unit.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER:

Author

There are three large bodies of fables generally known today. One is the series of fables that originated in the ancient culture of India; of these there are three collections, The Panchatantra, The Fables of Bidpai, and the Jataka Tales. These fables (treated specifically in the fifth grade unit on the fable) are the oldest, providing at least some of the material for the later Greek fables. Because of their association with the Buddha, they frequently are set about with religious as well as ethical significance. The second large group is the French fables of La Fontaine. The tales of Jean de la Fontaine, written in graceful verses, were based on the Latin versions of Aesop and the Fables of Bidpai.

But to an English speaking child, "fable" is nearly synonymous with "Aesop." Aesop, a deformed Greek slave said to have lived between 620 and 560 B. C., was thought to have used his fables to veil his political views. Indeed, legend says that he was murdered by political opponents who hurled him from a cliff. Whether Aesop actually lived or not, and whether or not he actually composed all or even part of the great body of fables attributed to him, the stories we know as "Aesop's Fables" have come down through a series of cultures to become a large and permanent part of the literary heritage of Western culture. (For a short but information-packed history of the development and history of the fables, see Joseph Jacobs' book, the core text for this unit.)

Genre

Fables had their origin in the talking-beast tales which developed as a part of the folklore of most primitive cultures. In some cultures these tales turned into legends and myths, as we can see in the case of the mythology of the American Indian. But when these tales came to be used for satiric and/or moralistic purposes, they became fables. Only the people of Greece and the people of India made this a general practice, so that most of the fables we know today derive either directly or indirectly from the beast tales of these two ancient cultures.

The fable in the traditional sense is a short moral lesson which uses animals or inanimate objects (but sometimes human beings) to personify abstractions of good or evil, of wisdom or foolishness, in simple and concrete dramatizations. Although there are similarities, the fable is different from both the proverb and the parable. The proverb tells no story. It has neither plot nor character, but is a succinct, usually one-sentence statement of some universal bit of wisdom. This distinction is significant to this unit, since the composition assignments will use proverbs as the donnée for students' fables. The parable is like the fable in that it tells a story, but its characters are human beings or things that are themselves, not personified. Whereas the fable deals with the ethics of human behavior, the parable treats of the spiritual relationship of God to man.

The fable is intended to be simple, and the moral is intended to be obvious--indeed, it is usually stated explicitly at the end of the fable. The personifications of the fable illustrate qualities, and the actions of the characters provide examples of wise or foolish behavior, in ways that are intended to be understandable and memorable to simple minds. Although not written especially for children, fables are more deserving of the term "children's literature" than any other form of writing in existence prior to the 18th century.

This is not to say that all facets of every piece of literature that can be called "fable" should be utterly clear to every child. Fables are especially useful for satiric purposes, and from the basic genre of fable have blossomed extremely complex literary productions, to which these comments about the fable apply only insofar as those literary achievements are basically fables. Three notable cases in point within this curriculum are The Wind in the Willows, George Orwell's Animal Farm, and the fourth book of Swift's Gulliver's Travels, all extremely complex underneath their deceptive simplicity, behind their masquerade as fables. But even the apparently simple "folk fables" which we deal with in this and other elementary units are frequently veiled about with satire, symbolism, and allegory. The teacher should understand clearly that in this introduction we are speaking of the basic, general characteristics of most things called "fables."

Structure

The structure of all fables is extremely simple, but one might classify fables according to their plot patterns into two general groups. One group contains those fables with a single impersonal character involved in a single incident to express the moral lesson. These fables contain one character, who is involved in one incident; the incident itself dramatizes the moral of the fable.

The other group of fables classed by plot pattern is the wise beast--foolish beast fable. In this plot pattern, the foolish beast acts or speaks as if he were acting or speaking wisely; the foolish beast appears momentarily to get the better of the wise beast; the foolish beast defeats himself in his pride and cupidity; and the wise beast gains the reward of virtue or wisdom. This group of fables can be centered around a single incident, like "The Fox and the Crow," "The Tree and the Reed," "The Fox and the Cat," and literally hundreds of others. But sometimes these wise beast--foolish beast fables contain two more or less parallel incidents. In "The Lion and the Mouse" first the Mouse is caught and then the Lion is caught. The difference in the two situations illustrates the wisdom of the Mouse and the foolishness of the Lion in his pride. One can readily see that all of Aesop's fables will not necessarily fit neatly into one of these two groups, but most of the fables are more or less variations of one or the other of these types. Since student composition of fables is an important part of this unit, the teacher should discuss with the students the ways in which individual fables vary from basic patterns so that the students will have some basic patterns to start from in composing their own fables.

Theme

In these fables of Aesop, there is one theme and one theme only per fable. It is both dramatized in the story and explicitly stated at the end of the story. The teacher should help the students see how a particular character in a fable represents (is the personification of) a single abstract idea--pride, humility, greed, vanity, etc. She should also help the students see how the particular abstraction that the character presents is especially suited to the animal in the story (it is much better for greed to be represented by a pig than by an owl, vanity by a peacock than by a sparrow, etc.). In this unit the teacher should be concerned with the suitability of the moral to the tale, something which was not so important in the first and second grade units on the fables of Aesop.

Frequently the genre is developed into a more meaningful tale with a complex structure, but then we should probably say that the fable is used as a device in the story. Because of the nature of the fable, however, especially in its adaptability to satiric purposes, the mature reader may find more "meaning" than the simple moral expresses. There is some suggestion, for example, of a satiric comparison between city and country life in the fable "The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse." The main point of the fable remains, in any case, the simple moral.

Character

The characters of simple fables are flat--they have no family, no pasts, no inner selves. They are generally completely impersonal, as "cold" as the abstractions they represent. True, the children may at times be sympathetic with one of the characters; but if they are it is probably because of the characteristics of the animal expressed in the story. For instance, they may feel a certain sympathy for a character just because he is a weak, "gentle" animal in danger from a bigger, more ferocious animal. The children are likely to "like" a mouse when he meets with a lion, or a lamb when he meets with a wolf, etc. This is especially true when the animal the children have a natural kinship with is the "wise beast" in the story. A fable is intended to work that way, to make the listener "like" the wise or the virtuous character, not because he *is* a certain character but because he is wise or virtuous. For instance, most children would probably like "bunnies" better than "turtles" if they were asked to make a preference, but they invariably prefer the tortoise in "The Hare and the Tortoise" because of the wise beast--foolish beast motif.

Style

Since the characters in fables function mainly as symbols, there are no descriptions of them. We meet a "mouse," or a "lion," or a "fox"; we rarely meet a "small, timid mouse scurrying busily about his day's work," or a "kingly, ferocious lion roaring wildly as he patrols his jungle realm," or even the conventional "sly old fox." Just as the characters are not dressed out in elaborate descriptions, neither is the simple narrative language of the fable. The style is straight, simple, sparse. Figures of speech and sensory images rarely rear their beautiful heads in fables. A fable is a kind of literary sugar-coated moral pill, and the sugar-coating is exceedingly thin. (For a thorough discussion of the evolution of fables as children's literature, see F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England*, 2nd ed., 1960.)

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

Literature Presentation

I. Although fables appeal strongly to children at the fourth grade level, it is recommended that the fables be presented and treated individually with intervals of possibly several days between presentations. The fables in the following list are recommended for presentation:

"The Fox and the Crow"
"The Lion and the Mouse"
"The Wolf and the Kid"
"The Fox and the Stork"
"The Jay and the Peacocks"
"The Fox and the Grapes"
"The Tree and the Reed"
"The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing"
"The Dog in the Manger"
"The Crow and the Pitcher"
"The Goose with the Golden Eggs"
"The Wind and the Sun"
"The Man, the Boy, and the Donkey"
"The Bundle of Sticks"
"The Milkmaid and Her Pail"

II. Since this unit does not prescribe any particular fables, the presentation and the details of interpretation are left pretty much up to the teacher. Fables lend themselves to several types of presentation.

A. The fables may be read aloud by the teacher to the pupils.

B. The core text could be purchased by the school or pupil and kept available in the classroom during the study of the book. With a book in the hands of each pupil, fables could be presented for silent reading, thus being read for pleasure.

C. Dialogue reading is another effective way to present fables. Pupils may be chosen for the characters in the story and, along with a narrator, may present fables to the group in dialogue form.

In any of these methods of presentation time must be devoted to vocabulary and an explanation of the fable. (See III following.)

III. Interpretation (Sample plan)

A. Read two or three fables, including their "morals."

B. Read the class a fable without reading the moral:

1. What was the character's mistake?
2. Could anyone other than this type of character make such

a mistake?
3. Tell what the story shows about people by making a statement about an animal.

C. Read another fable, omitting the moral:

1. Who made a mistake this time?
2. What was the mistake?
3. What does the story show?

D. Read another story without reading the moral:

How does this story apply to people?

E. Arrive at the characteristics of a fable by asking the following questions:

1. What sort of characters do all of these stories have? (Animals that talk)
2. How are all of these stories written? (Short and simple)
3. What is the purpose of each of the stories? (To teach a lesson)

F. Discuss the meaning of the words "fable" and "moral" with the students.

G. Divide the class into groups and give each group a copy of a fable. (All might use the same fable.) Ask each group to try to decide upon and write the "moral" of the fable.

H. Give individual members of the class copies of different fables. Ask each to determine the lesson or moral of the fable he has received.

Composition Activities

I. Give the boys and girls a chance to write their own fables. It would probably be advisable to have the group create at least one fable orally before asking students to write their own fables. Some delightful creations may result!

A. Start with a moral or "proverb" and have the students invent episodes using animals to dramatize the proverb. Some morals you might give children to work with are these: "Haste makes waste," "Where there's a will, there's a way," and "A Penny saved is a penny earned."

B. Try to plan a situation, or "plot," in which wise behavior is opposed to foolish behavior, with the wise behavior prevailing at the end in such a way as to exemplify the moral selected in A.

C. After discussing the traits of different animals (e. g., the lion is regal; the snake is wily; the tortoise is slow but steady), choose animals whose characteristics (real or imagined) will suitably exemplify the abstractions implied in Exercise B. Be sure that children understand the impersonal nature of the character. For example, if a child wished his "wise beast" to be a rabbit, he would not want to name it Peter Rabbit or Cottontail because these have meaning and character for children. Using names such as Proud Rabbit, Grumpy Rabbit, or Mr. Rabbit will keep the fables more true to form.

D. Write the fable, inventing dialogue appropriate to the action and to the characteristics exemplified by the animal characters.

E. To add a final flourish, some students might like to turn the "morals" of their fables into rhyming couplets. Example ("The Fox and the Crow"):

"A flatterer usually wants a prize,
So be on guard if you are wise."

Language Explorations

I. Vocabulary

Since the fables for this unit stem from ancient traditions and have been passed down predominantly through folk cultures, the versions in the Jacobs book retain many folk (particularly British) expressions: "to do you a turn," "dimity frock," "chip hat," etc.

II. History of Language

While they are studying fables, stories passed down through several cultures, the students might enjoy a brief lesson in etymology, or how individual words are passed down through several cultures. The following studies apply to words from the fable "The Wind and the Sun."

traveller

Middle English
travalour

Old French
travaillier,
"to be weary"

cloak

Old French *cloke* or
clogue

Medieval Latin *cloca*,
"a cape worn by
horsemen and travellers"

cloud

Middle English
clud, "cloud"

Old English
clud, "rock,
hill"

despair

Middle English
despeiren

Old French *despeir*

dispute

Middle English
despute

Old French *desputer*

Latin *disputare*, "to
discuss": *dis*, "apart" + *putare*, "to
consider"

glory

Old French *glorie*

Latin *gloria*

kindness

kind + *ness*
(first used in
Middle English,
around 1350)

sun

Middle English
sonne

Old English *sunne*

severity

French *sévérité*

Latin *severitas*,
"harshness"

Extended Activities

I. Match the fables and their meanings. (These two exercises or similar ones may be used at different times during the teaching of the unit. Their purpose is to provide practice in making inferences.)

A.

1. The Lion and the Mouse
2. The Wolf and the Kid
3. The Fox and the Grapes
4. The Ant and the Grasshopper

a. It is easy to dislike what you cannot get.
b. Little friends may prove great friends.
c. Liars are not believed even when they tell the truth
d. Things are not always what they seem

5. The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing	e. Work before you play
6. The Boy and the Wolf	f. It is easy to be brave from a safe distance

B.

1. The Crow and the Pitcher	a. Little by little does the trick.
2. The Man, the Boy, and the Donkey	b. Union gives strength.
3. The Hare and the Tortoise	c. Please all and you will please none.
4. The Bundle of Sticks	d. Fine feathers do not make fine birds.
5. The Milkmaid and Her Pail	e. Little by little wins the race.
6. The Jay and the Peacocks	f. Do not count your chickens before they are hatched.

II. In order to give students some practice in classifying by noting similar characteristics, ask some of the following questions after many fables have been presented. (Sample answers follow the questions.)

A. Which fables show the tables being turned?

The Fox and the Stork
The Hare and the Tortoise

B. In which fables do animals disguise themselves in order to try to fool others?

The Ass in the Lion's Skin
The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing
The Cat and the Birds
The Jay and the Peacocks

C. Which fables show that things may be accomplished little by little?

The Crow and the Pitcher
The Hare and the Tortoise

D. In which fables does someone count on gaining much and loses everything?

The Milkmaid and Her Pail

The Goose and the Golden Eggs
The Dog and the Shadow

E. Which fables show that in union there is strength?

The Four Oxen and the Lion
The Bundle of Sticks

F. In which two fables did someone foolishly open his mouth and lose what he had?

The Fox and the Crow
The Dog and the Shadow
(The children will probably also remember Chanticleer and the Fox from the third grade unit.)

III. Find some of Aesop's fables which were later written in the form of poetry by La Fontaine.

Examples: (La Fontaine's titles)
The Grasshopper and the Ant
The Fox and the Crow
The Frog Who Would Be an Ox
The Town Rat and the Country Rat
The Fox and the Stork
The Cock and the Pearl
The Donkey with the Sponges and the Donkey with the Salt

IV. Proverbs from Poor Richard's Almanac might be related to the morals of some fables.

POETRY:

John Hay, "The Enchanted Shirt" Golden Treasury of Poetry
(Students will be quick to recognize and enjoy the satiric implications of the wise and foolish behavior in this fable-like poem.)

Joseph Lauren, "The Fox and the Grapes"
Golden Treasury of Poetry

Joseph Lauren, "The Frogs Who Wanted a King"
Golden Treasury of Poetry

(The students will enjoy comparing the verse forms of fables to the prose versions. They might attempt to analyze the differences in effectiveness of the moral applications, the differences in the presentation of character, etc.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Anita Brenner, *The Boy Who Could Do Anything, and Other Mexican Folk Tales* (New York: William R. Scott Publishers, 1942).
Some of these moralistic stories are definitely Mexican; others seem to be fables of Aesop in Mexican disguises.

Joel Chandler Harris, *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus*, ed. Richard Chase (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1955).

Jean de La Fontaine, *Fables*, tr. Margaret Wise Brown (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940).
These French fables appear in a large picture book with bright illustrations by Andre Helle.

Andrew Lang, *The Red Fairy Book* (Toronto: Ambassador Books, 1960).
French tales adapted from Madame d'Aulnoy, and Norse, German, English, and Russian tales are included in this collection.

Frances Martin, *Nine Tales of Coyote* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950).
Coyote, animal god of the Nez Perce Indians, makes use of his cleverness and magic powers in many situations.

Frances Martin, *Nine Tales of Raven* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951).
Authentic tales of Indians of the Northwest Coast have been illustrated with pictures inspired by a study of their art.

Florence Sakade, *Japanese Children's Favorite Stories* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1958).
Though true to the spirit of the Japanese originals, the stories in this collection are so simple that they are easily read by slower children.

Leo Tolstoy, *Fables and Fairy Tales*, tr. Ann Dunnigan (New York: New American Library of World Literature, Inc., Signet Classic CP132, 1962), 60¢.
This paperback edition contains legends of Russia during and preceding the days of the tsars.

Yuri Yasuda, Old Tales of Japan (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1956).

Tales which have been enjoyed for centuries by the children of Japan are charmingly retold for Western children. They are appropriately illustrated with full-colored pictures.

Unit 40: Other Lands and People:

A BROTHER FOR THE ORPHELINES

OTHER LANDS AND PEOPLE: A BROTHER FOR THE ORPHELINES

CORE TEXT:

Natalie Savage Carlson, A Brother for the Orphelines (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1959).

ALTERNATE TEXTS:

Meindert DeJong, The House of Sixty Fathers (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1956).

Claire Huchet Bishop, All Alone (New York: The Viking Press, 1953).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

This charming story of a group of "orphelines," little girl orphans in Paris, continues the series of elementary units about children of other lands. These units seek to reveal the characteristics that children everywhere have in common; they also seek to teach something of the valuable and distinctive characteristics of other cultures. This unit has as its major objectives (1) to help children recognize more characteristics of a way of life different from their own; (2) to emphasize the similarities in children's emotions, qualities, and behavior patterns; and (3) to enjoy a story about children who live in another land.

The objectives of this unit relate it to all the other elementary units on stories about children of other lands. The story almost directly parallels the "Madeline" stories that the children will have heard in the third grade "fanciful stories" unit: the relatively regimented school life in Madeline is roughly like that of the orphanage in A Brother for the Orphelines; the boards of directors constitute an alien threat in each; Miss Clavel is a rather starched version of Madame Flattot; and of course Josine is the same kind of stubborn miniature rebel as Madeline. The diminutive heroines of each story accomplish exactly what they desire, and even use similar methods. A Brother for the Orphelines presents a view of Paris somewhat similar to that which forms the background of The Red Balloon (third grade unit). This story combines the high good humor and the charming characters of the modern fanciful tale with the basic structural motifs of the folk tale to produce a work of excellent quality.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER:

Author

Biographical notes are provided in the back of the core text for the author, Natalie Savage Carlson, and for the well-known illustrator of the book, Garth Williams.

Genre

Stories of other lands were among the first realistic stories for children. Many of the early stories in this mode were excellent works and are still popular with children: Hans Brinker and Heidi, for example. During recent years, because of the tremendous increase in emphasis upon social studies in the public schools, many books of this general type have appeared. Unfortunately, many of these books are sub-literary or worse in quality--despite an air of a feverish excitement to present the "facts" about other societies. Such books should be judged on their authenticity, of course, but they should also be judged according to their literary qualities--such things as plot development, character portrayal, and excellence of style. When the authors of such books have more and more employed the devices of children's literature--presenting a child's view of reality, employing common structural motifs, developing truly distinctive and humorous characters--they have produced some books of real note, quite different from pills of "social fact and history" thinly coated with the artificial sugar of a condescending tone. The books about the orphelines in Paris by Natalie Savage Carlson achieve some real literary distinction and at the same time present some marvelous insights into the French character and the French way of life.

Structure

Although Josine and her orpheline "sisters" live in an old decrepit building, they are surrounded by the security and happiness generated by the warmth and care of Madame Flattot and Genevieve. Josine and her friends are sincere people, but they are not goody-goodies; they are the sort of people that cause interesting things to happen. The fate of Coucky, the foundling living with the girls, provides the suspense for the development of the plot; and the vague social forces suggested by the "board of directors" lurk in the background as the monster which threatens the happiness of the orphelines. More or less by accident, because of her stubbornness, Josine resolves the plot by exhibiting the plight of the orphelines to the public via the newspaper reporter. Her courageous journey alone into the world with the baby boy enables the orphelines to overcome the monster that threatens them and leads directly to the establishment of a new home, more secure and even happier in the prospect. Thus we discover in the story many of the elements so common to the structural patterns of children's literature.

Character

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the book is its marvelous rendering of characters whose appeal is distinct and powerful. The story deals entirely with human characters, with colorful types which fit into the story's setting perfectly, characters who seem to be completely French. They are common, hardworking, conservative people with an innate sense of humor; their actions spring directly from the warmth and sincerity of their spontaneously-expressed emotions. The characters are especially charming in the transparency of their small deceits: some of the most masterful scenes in the book reveal the "French temperament" through the broad comedy of burlesque. The flock of little girls excitedly lead the policeman astray by engaging him in the argument as to Coucky's parentage; the merry-go-round man is shocked at the idea of giving up his merry-go-round even though he no longer really wants it; and Josine is a wide-eyed innocent while collecting marbles from the unsuspecting boys.

Style

The descriptions in the book are brilliantly precise: the bright, cheerful merry-go-round; the comfortable poverty of the orphanage itself; the fascination the sewers hold for the little girls; etc. The book is especially attractive to children because of the masterful use of dialogue. Much of the description in the book, as well as most of the elements which thoroughly characterize the rather remarkable figures, comes from the "talking" in the book that children enjoy so much.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

Literature Presentation

I. As preparation for this unit, the teacher might begin a discussion of the "Madeline" stories (Grade 3 unit) that take place in a boarding school in Paris. Most of the children will be familiar with the stories. The teacher might explain to the students that the story for this unit also takes place in Paris, in a place that resembles Madeline's boarding school to a certain extent. All the people who live in this place are girls, but they have no fathers or mothers so they all live together with Madame Flattot and Genevieve. Ask the children to see if they can recognize anyone in the story like Madeline.

II. The teacher should read the entire story aloud to the children, although the reading will probably require more than one session. The teacher should prepare herself well to pronounce the French names and words fluently; she should know the book well so that she can read the dialogue (which occupies a significant part both in importance and in volume) with the proper intonation and enthusiasm.

III. It will probably be desirable to lead a discussion session following each reading session. The teacher should attempt to lead the students to discover the similarities and differences between themselves and the people in the story as well as considering the literary qualities and elements of the story.

Composition Activities

I. Since the story ends with the orphelines moving to a new home, some paragraphs describing the adventures connected with moving would come quite easily. The children could develop such ideas as: choosing rooms, playing marbles, Coucky's first birthday, playing in secret passages, etc.

II. The children might like to imagine various conversations that would take place in the new orphanage: between Josine and a group of boys, between Brigitte and a group of boys, between Yvette and one boy, between Madame Flattot and Monsieur Roger, etc. Have them try to capture the essential characteristics of each of the participants in their speech. (This exercise would be quite difficult, and could probably best be handled by committees of students, perhaps using a tape recorder to combat self-consciousness.)

Language Explorations

I. Phonology

Here are some of the French names and words that appear in the story. Diacritical markings follow the International Phonetic Alphabet.

Madame Flattot	/ ma dam′ fla to' /
Josine	/ ʒo zi:n' /
Monsieur de Goupil	/ mə sjø' də gu pi:l' /
Brigitte	/ bri ʒit'/
Mademoiselle Grignon	/ madmwa zɛl' gri ɲɔ̃' /
Yvette	/ i vɛt' /
Pierre	/ pjɛ:r /
Alexandre	/ alɛk sã dr/
Lepetit	/ lə pə ti' /

orpheline (an orphan) / ɔr fə liːn' /
poussette (a market basket on wheels) / pu sɛt' /
bida bida bidau (language used in talking to a baby) / bi də
bi də bi du'/
zim la boum (sound of a drum) / zim lə bum' /
bonbon (candy) / bɔ̃ bɔ̃ /

Differences in French and English pronunciations (different graphemes or phonemes children know) should be pointed out. Notice that "bonbon," which has become a word in our English language, is of French origin but is pronounced differently by the French. Children who have studied French may give other examples of French words.

II. Vocabulary

Reference is made to the metric system, which is commonly used in Europe. The children may wish to learn names and meanings of other units of metric measure besides the following which appear in the story:

liter (a measure of capacity comparable to the quart)
kilometer (a measure of length which equals about six-tenths of a mile)

Extended Activities

I. This story offers some good opportunities for dramatization. The children could work out a skit about moving day from the orphanages to the "castle." The marble incident could be fun to dramatize. Other skits could center around "fat day" and "fish day."

II. Some research might be done on France's "fat day" and Mardi Gras in the United States. Then these two days could be discussed to note likenesses and differences. Discussion could also center around the activities the orphelines had and how they were similar to ours (e.g. marbles and the merry-go-round).

POETRY:

James Whitcomb Riley, "Little Orphant Annie" *Time for Poetry* (This poem may have a double appeal for children in connection with this unit. First of all, the poem is theoretically about an "orphan," although the conception is hardly important. Of some greater interest to the children, however, will be the dialect in which the poem is written, especially if the children have shown any interest in the observable differences between

French and English. They may be surprised to investigate such noticeable differences between varieties of the same language.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire, Magic Meadow (Toronto: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1958).
A story of Peterli, who lived in the Swiss Alps and herded goats for his grandmother, a cheesemaker. A good story to study "settings."

Arthur Chrisman, Shen of the Sea (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1925).
A series of short stories written for children, with a setting in China.

Beatrice Liu, Little Wu and the Watermelons (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1954).
Wu, a Chinese farm boy, relinquishes the money he has saved for a present for his mother in order to buy land for his family.

Unit 41: Historical Fiction:

LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE

HISTORICAL FICTION:
LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE

CORE TEXT:

Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House on the Prairie* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953).

ALTERNATE TEXTS:

The "Little House" books by Laura Ingalls Wilder (all published by Harper and Brothers) become more difficult with each volume. The teacher could decide which of the following books could be substituted:

1. *Little House in the Big Woods*
2. *On the Banks of Plum Creek*
3. *By the Shores of Silver Lake*
4. *The Long Winter*

Elizabeth Coatsworth, *Away Goes Sally* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934). The story of a New England migration from Massachusetts to Maine somewhat after the American Revolution.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

Like a great many fairy tales and folk tales, the selection for this unit, *Little House on the Prairie*, looks upon the external world from the perspective of a stable family group. As an historical novel which approaches very nearly to biography, its concern is not to treat the characters heroically, but rather as they are remembered by the author. And instead of the fairy and folk world of dragons and trolls, there are the actual enemies which men faced as they tried to bring their civilization to the frontier: winter snow, summer heat, prairie fires, wolves, and Indians.

The objectives of this unit are (1) to show the students what it was like to pioneer on the Kansas prairie; (2) more particularly to show the strength of the pioneer, to show his attitude toward the life he found on the prairie; (3) more broadly, to account for the westward movement of American culture--to show what causes a family to leave an established community and settle elsewhere; and (4) to strengthen the student's notions of historical fiction as a literary form.

This unit is closely related to the other units in the curriculum on historical fiction. The elementary units on *The Courage of Sarah Noble* (Grade 3), and *Children of the Covered Wagon* (Grade 5), as well as

Willa in biography (Grade 4), deal with themes and settings quite similar.

In connection with the pioneer theme the Grade 8 unit, The Heritage of the Frontier, would be of interest, and with the general theme the Grade 10 unit Sin and Loneliness. In connection with the genre, the Grade 8 unit, The Historical Novel Hero: Johnny Tremain and Tale of Two Cities should offer further suggestions for analysis and presentation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER:

Author

Laura Ingalls Wilder is the author of a series of eight "Little House" books. They form an account of her family's life as pioneers in different parts of the Midwest--Wisconsin, Kansas, Minnesota, and South Dakota. She herself is the Laura of her books.

Genre

While historical fiction is thoroughly established today as a respectable literary form (through the work of Robert Graves, Thomas B. Costain, Kenneth Roberts, etc.), there is some danger when it is used as a teaching tool in schools. The primary end of historical fiction must be to entertain. The author who writes to show how life was in medieval France or Renaissance Italy or Kansas in the 1870's before giving thought to amusing his reader is treading on dangerous ground. It is important to point out this distinction since we will go on to distinguish historical fiction as a kind of fiction that seeks to reconstruct the life and thought of some age or period of time other than our own. All of the usual components of the novel--the setting, the plot, the characterization--are set in the past, though the author has the choice of inventing just as much or as little as he wants. Real personages, actual events and places are frequently introduced into the historical novel along with the fictional variables (the Ingalls Family, including the author herself, in Little House on the Prairie).

It is just this historical background, rather than the fictional aspect, which imposes certain limitations on the novelist, which establishes his excellence. The story must be historically accurate and authentic in enough details so that what is fictional is believable and digestible. If the author does his job well, the reader will feel that he is reliving the past, that the people and places are as real to him as contemporary people and places. It is vital that the author capture the spirit of the age, a feeling for the time he is writing about. If the author captures this quality of his past, he has some freedom to alter particulars. Sir Walter Scott brings together people and events which were not contemporary, but the novel has always captured the reader by the time he realizes this, so no matter.

There is one more criterion which is relevant to the creation of any kind of fiction, but might be overlooked by the writer of historical fiction. This is the presentation of some central topical theme around which the work revolves--but this theme is always a part of the problem or complication which animates the characters and events of the novel. Sometimes the historical novelist in his zeal to recapture the physical past might overlook this quality, with the result that his novel would be lacking in interest.

A novel may be written historical or may become historical; that is, the author may choose his subject from the past or he may choose it from the present, in which case time will make it past. Ivanhoe is an example of the first case, while The Grapes of Wrath, or The Caine Mutiny, or For Whom the Bell Tolls would exemplify the latter case, where the author and his subject are contemporary at the time of the writing. Yet there comes a time when even the latter is indistinguishable from the work consciously written with the historical past. Little House on the Prairie is a novel that deals with the historical past, even though it is an autobiographical past for Laura Ingalls Wilder. Because so much attention is given to describing such particulars as the building of a home and furniture making, we clearly see that one of the primary ends of the novel is the physical reconstruction of the past, which as we said above is what distinguishes historical fiction from other genres.

Character

The historical novel may have many variations from the contemporary scene, but the least likely area for any radical differences is in the characterization. Places and events will be different, but people tend to remain constant. A little girl in 1960 and a little girl in 1840 will behave pretty much alike. Only when the customs of two societies are drastically different might people seem to behave differently. Little House on the Prairie does have what could be termed distinct historical characterization: the pioneer. There is a flexibility or resilience which takes life on the prairie on its own terms, which does not try to impose a foreign way of life on the land. Conversations in chapters XXV and XXVI express this quality very well: Laura's parents affirm the large expanse of time before them, they express their patience and willingness to move and begin again. They can adjust to different territory, plant more garden, build new houses, and put down new roots.

Structure

Little House on the Prairie is bound together much as the Ingalls family itself is bound together by the solidarity of the family group, evidenced by their love. The symbol of this solidarity is the home, which shuts the rest of the world out and protects the family within. And in this story the home can be either the covered wagon or the log cabin.

The book itself contains a series of adventures, each presenting a situation where the security of the home is threatened: a series of tests of courage and dependability. Misfortune comes, but it is endured and accepted. Each peril finds its end in the comfort and security of the log cabin on the prairie. No matter what the difficulty, no matter what the nature of the foe, the cabin and the closeness and love of the family provide for all the needs of the family group. The "monsters" which lie beyond the home, the snows, heats, fires and wolves, are put off, not by the symbolic magic of folk tale, but by the father's fiddle and the mother's love; in short, by the solidarity of the family group.

The story is also unified by a series of parallel episodes in which each adventure of the story is followed by another somewhat like it; however, the events differ considerably in action, meaning, and mood. One chapter may be wholly peaceful and serene, another will depict festive occasions or fearful adventures. And despite the various moods conveyed, each chapter is bound by a consistent set of attitudes to those preceding and following.

Style

The style of the story is attractive. Mrs. Wilder describes both the beauty and the loneliness and terror of the prairie; she knows how to render a family group. Her dialogue is colloquial, and her descriptive passages are rich with precise perception: salt pork frying, green grasses blowing on the prairie, the gurgling of the river, warm friendly voices singing on the starlit prairie.

Theme

The central values upheld by the book are familial values (as is common in the folk tale). However, nothing of the melodramatic intrudes to break up the historical coherence of the story. The central characters of the story are all good without being saintly; the evils to which the story points are familiar frontier evils. And because the disasters are natural and can be anticipated, the family is able to move on without a heavy feeling of despair. There is no supernatural curse hanging overhead, defying all honest effort. Thus when a home is left behind, the only losses are of replaceable items--nothing irreplaceable is left. The violin, the tools for building a home, the utensils for cooking--these go in the wagon. From these all else springs, the plow will come in exchange for animal skins which Pa has secured with the bullets he's molded for himself. As the family travels, there is never any need to lighten the wagon--to throw away what cannot be replaced (there is this need in the wagons of Children of the Covered Wagon). At the end of Little House on the Prairie, the family that has lost the horses for its wagon is chided for not having a dog and for tethering the horses carelessly, and not for staying with their wagon, which contained "everything they owned in the world." From the family and a few implements, the Ingalls way of life is regenerated.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

Literature Presentation

I. The teacher should read the book carefully for herself before reading it aloud to the children so that she may grasp the feeling for the prairie life that is present in the book. Since increasing numbers of books are now being published in series, this will be a good book to use to introduce series reading. When the children have had one of these books read to them, they will wish to read the other books by the same author. The vocabulary is such that the teacher may encourage them to do this.

II. Two or three chapters should be read at each session, and time should be allowed for discussion after the reading. The teacher will have to pace the book according to the abilities and interest of the class. In the discussions the teacher should lead the class to both general themes and elucidation of particulars.

III. Sample discussion (Chapters 1-5)

A. General considerations (probably two or three class periods)

1. Give special attention to the main theme of this part of the book (journey to the West) and the sequence of events related to it. Note the time and place in which each of the main happenings occurred.

2. Help children to see that behavior was influenced by attitudes which were characteristic of the period in which the pioneers lived; e.g., emphasis upon table manners even in informal settings (chapter 4) and the belief that children should be seen and not heard (chapter 5).

3. Observe that certain other feelings have constantly been shared by all people; for example, parents' and children's love for one another; excitement and anxiety concerning the unknown (chapters 1 and 2); the children's attachment to

pets (chapters 2 and 3); the recognition of help from a power beyond man (chapter 2).

B. Chapter by chapter discussion

1. Why did Pa decide to move? How many people are "too many"? Why did Pa want to see wild animals live without being afraid? What lake did the Ingalls cross? How is that lake related to the Mississippi? Is the Kansas flatland different from the Big Woods of Wisconsin?

2. How did Pa decide which path to take at the fork? Was Pa smart to cross the creek when he did? Why couldn't Jack ride in the wagon? Why did Pa need Jack as a watch dog?

3. Why did Pa decide not to go further on? How did Jack know where to find the family?

4. Why does the author, Laura Ingalls Wilder, give us so many details about the way the food was cooked or about the way the girls dressed themselves? What is a dickcissel? How did Ma do her ironing? Is a fiddle different from a violin?

5. How did Pa know the name for the Verdigris River? How did Pa get the logs up for the sides of the house? What is a Gypsy King? What is strange about Old Dan Tucker?

Composition Activities

I. Ask the children to write a diary as Laura might have kept it on her covered wagon journey from Wisconsin to Kansas. Children might work either individually or in groups to write different parts of the diary after the class has reviewed the sequence of events. The following beginning may be suggestive:

March 30, 1874

Dear Diary,

Today we said good-by to our little house in the Big Woods. Shutters were over its windows so it could not see us go. But I'm sure it's missing us tonight. We have had so many happy times there.

Everything we need is in our big covered wagon. We are taking warm clothing, bedding, tools, dishes, some food, and seeds to plant in the new country. Of course, we are not taking our beds, tables, and chairs, because Pa can make new ones when we need them.

I am glad that we could take our dog, Jack. He has been our faithful friend and protector for so long that we couldn't do without him. He will make a good watch dog for us when we come to Indian territory.

(Tell about crossing the lake and spending the night at the vacant house. Show what Laura thought of each happening which occurred. Remember that people felt and acted much as we do today, although certain of their attitudes and beliefs were different.)

II. Mauree Applegate (*Easy in English*, Row, Peterson, and Co., 1960, p. 462) suggests asking children to tell yarns their great-grandmothers told them or similar stories they have read about early days. She says that all of Laura Ingalls Wilder's books furnish ideas for topic sentences. The sentences she lists are:

"We had fun at Christmas, even without money to buy presents."
"When we went a-traveling in those days, it *was* a journey."
"Sometimes we nearly ran out of flour."
"It was the worst when somebody in the family got sick."

III. Ask the children to discuss in a paragraph or two how Laura and Mary were different. They might discuss their ways of showing happiness, their reactions to new experiences, and their ways of meeting danger.

IV. Refer to chapter XVI in *Little House on the Prairie.* Have the children pretend they are Laura and wish to write a letter to a "friend" in the Big Woods.

A lesson in letter writing should precede this activity, in which teacher and children

A. Discuss the fact that a letter is a written expression of oral convention.
B. Explain why a heading and a greeting are necessary.
C. Decide what is to be told.
D. Use a plan for developing paragraphs (refer to section on paragraph building in *Easy in English* by Mauree Applegate).
E. Explain necessity of a closing and a signature.

For more details on letter writing see chapter 10 ("Letters are Self-Stamped") in Mauree Applegate, Easy in English (New York: Row, Peterson and Co., 1960).

V. Ask the children to tell about any of the several episodes in which the description is very detailed--such as the construction of the door, or the rocking chair, or the fireplace, etc. Perhaps use diagrams to help make the description clear.

Language Explorations

I. Diction

A. Figurative Language

A study of the metaphors and similes used in this book would help children to enjoy them. Such a study might help them begin using figurative language in their own work. Some examples of these figures are:

1. "The wind sounded like someone crying."
2. "I lit out for home like a scared rabbit."
3. "The voices of the Indians were something like an axe chopping and something like a dog barking."
4. "Wind blew past the house with a rushing sound like running water."

Discuss how these figures help to describe things or feelings. Lead into further creative experiments such as the following:

1. Ask children to express an ending for this statement:
   The wind today is as gentle as __________
   (The children's response might be a lamb, my mother's voice, rain falling off the roof, a fluttering leaf, etc.)

2. Another sentence ending might be this:
   "Let's be as quiet as __________________"
   (a blade of grass waving, fog coming in, a cloud moving by.)

3. Let the children finish these independently:
   as loud as __________, as happy as __________,
   as sad as ___________, as slippery as_________,
   as long as __________, as bright as __________.

4. Another topic might have to do not only with seeing things, but also with touching things: How did the snow look? feel?

It might be smooth, soft, fluffy. It might look like drifting feathers or as if God were sprinkling flour.

B. Homonyms

Do the underlined words have homonyms?

1. Laura and Mary crossed too many creeks to count. (creaks) (Perhaps we pronounce "creek" as crick, in dialect?)
2. The wind was mourning. (morning)
3. Pet and Patty rolled back and forth and over. (fourth)
4. The fire crackled merrily inside the ring of bare ground. (bear)
5. The great blue sky stretched overhead. (blew)
6. The gophers had crinkling noses and wee paws. (pause, Pa's)
7. They looked like bits of dead wood sticking out of the ground. (would)
8. The gophers ran into their hole. (whole)
9. "Old Dan Tucker died with a toothache in his heel." (heal)
10. There was plenty of meat in the house. (meet)
11. One of the men rode away to fetch the sick family. (road)
12. Pa had to hew and whittle a latch for the door. (hue)
13. The songs of the meadow larks came down like a rain of music. (rein, reign)
14. Pa climbed to the wagon-seat and picked up the reins. (rains)
15. Mary loved to sew but Laura didn't. (so, sow)
16. After the Indians had gone, a great peace settled on the prairie. (piece)
17. On they went, and mother deer with their fawns bounded into the woods. (dear, there)

III. Phonology

In order to illustrate to children that a variation in stress patterns can both give a life-like quality to reading and make differences in meaning apparent, try the following exercise with them. Have the children read the following sentence a number of times (perhaps the teacher should demonstrate first), varying the pattern of stress to indicate various meanings. Discuss the differences in meaning with the children.

"Are Indians in them?" she almost whispered.
"Are Indians in them?" she almost whispered.
"Are Indians in them?" she almost whispered.

"Are Indians in *them?*" she almost whispered.
"Are Indians in them?" she almost *whispered.*

Extended Activities

Some of the children could easily make a model log house and covered wagon. A committee might like to make the characters of clothes-pin dolls or to learn to make corn husk dolls like pioneer children had.

POETRY:

Kathryn and Byron Jackson, "Open Range";
Badger Clark, "Cottonwood Leaves" *Time for Poetry*

(Both of these poems capture successfully the grandeur of the open plains, familiar to most Nebraska children. Both poems also represent feelings similar to those expressed at times by little Laura: "Open Range" expresses the wonder and humility of the realization of the immense world of the open plains, and "Cottonwood Leaves" captures the same sense that Laura had of the mixture of admiration, curiosity, and fear toward the Indians.)

Vachel Lindsay, "An Indian Summer Day on the Prairie"

(This poem appears in Miriam B. Huber [ed.], *Story and Verse for Children* [New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955], and in Vachel Lindsay, *The Congo and Other Poems*, also published by The Macmillan Company. Children would be interested in its unusual description of a day using symbols reminiscent of Indian lore.)

The following poem by Stephen Vincent Benét captures as well as any ever written the inexplicable desire of the pioneer to "move on" that quite clearly moved men like Laura's father to "open up" the West, in spite of hardship.

WESTERN WAGONS

by

Stephen Vincent Benét

They went with axe and rifle, when the trail was still to blaze,
They went with wife and children, in the prairie-schooner days.
With banjo and with frying pan--Susanna, don't you cry!
For I'm off to California to get rich out there or die!

We've broken land and cleared it, but we're tired of where we are.
They say that wild Nebraska is a better place by far.
There's gold in far Wyoming, there's black earth in Ioway,
So pack up the kids and blankets, for we're moving out today!

The coward never started and the weak died on the road,
And all across the continent the endless campfires glowed.
We'd taken land and settled--but a traveler passed by--
And we're going West tomorrow--Lord, never ask us why!

We're going West tomorrow, where the promises can't fail.
O'er the hills in legions, boys, and crowd the dusty trail!
We shall starve and freeze and suffer. We shall die and tame the lands.
But we're going West tomorrow, with our fortune in our hands.

--From: A Book of Americans by Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benét.
Copyright, 1933, by Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benét. Copyright renewed, © 1961, by Rosemary Carr Benét. Reprinted by permission of Brandt and Brandt.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Jean Fritz, The Cabin Faced West (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1958).
The story of Ann Hamilton, the first girl to live west of the Alleghenies.

Lois Lenski, Strawberry Girl (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1945).
The story of a girl who raises strawberries in the Florida lake country.

Unit 42: Historical Fiction:

THE MATCHLOCK GUN

HISTORICAL FICTION:
THE MATCHLOCK GUN

CORE TEXT:

Walter D. Edmonds, The Matchlock Gun (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1941).

ALTERNATE TEXT:

Marguerite de Angeli, Elin's America (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1941). The story of Swedish children who lived during the establishment of a new home in America in 1648.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

The selection for this unit, The Matchlock Gun, presents one incident from the history of colonial America which succinctly captures the spirit of that time. The story deals with a French-inspired Indian raid in 1757 that got as far as Guilderland, just outside of Albany City. The incident, concerning a real family in that Dutch settlement--the Van Alstynes-- portrays the heroism of Gertrude Van Alstyne and her two children, Edward and Trudy. It is not a story which might appear in history books, rather, it has been handed down generation by generation. Though the raid actually took place and though the matchlock gun was fired, the story probably must be classified as "historical fiction" rather than "fictionalized history," where the latter term describes a richly and imaginatively embellished historical event.

The objectives of this unit are (1) to give to students a feeling that they might have some direct knowledge of colonial history; (2) more particularly, to acquaint the reader with colonial New York when the French and the English (with Indians aiding both sides) were battling each other; (3) to highlight the concept of time as seen in earlier eras, where events take place within the specific confines of time; and (4) to maintain the student's appreciation of historical fiction as a valid literary mode.

This unit is closely related to the other "historical fiction" units in the curriculum. The elementary units on Caroline and Her Kettle Named Maud (Grade 2), The Courage of Sarah Noble (Grade 3), Little House on the Prairie (Grade 4), and Children of the Covered Wagon (Grade 5) deal with quite similar themes and settings. In connection with the pioneer theme the Grade 8 unit, The Heritage of the Frontier, would be of interest. In connection with the genre, the Grade 8 unit, The

Historical Novel Hero: Johnny Tremain and Tale of Two Cities, should offer further suggestions for analysis and presentation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER:

Author

Walter D. Edmonds was born in Boonville, New York. In his earlier years, he asked a friend what he should write about. The answer was that he had stories all around him. This friend knew that Walter Edmonds had been extremely interested from his childhood days in the exciting and wonderful stories he had found in old records, libraries, and family histories. As a result he has based most of his books on happenings in the early history of New York State.

Genre

While historical fiction is thoroughly established today as a respectable literary form (Robert Graves, Thomas B. Costain, Kenneth Roberts, etc.), there is some danger when it is used as a teaching tool in schools. The primary end of historical fiction must be to entertain. The author who writes to show how life was in medieval France or Renaissance Italy or colonial New York before giving thought to amusing his reader is treading on dangerous ground. It is important to point out this distinction since we will go on to distinguish historical fiction as a kind of fiction that seeks to reconstruct the life and thought of some age or period of time other than our own. All of the usual components of the novel--the setting, the plot, the characterization--are set in the past, although the author has the choice of inventing just as much or as little as he wants. Real personages, actual events and places are frequently introduced into the historical novel along with the fictional variables (as the Van Alstynes and the Indian raid of 1757).

It is just this historical background, rather than the fictional aspect, which imposes certain limitations on the novelist, which establishes his excellence. The story must be authentic in enough details so that what is fictional is believable and digestible. If the author does his job well, the reader will feel that he is reliving the past, that the people and places are as real to him as contemporary people and places. It is vital that the author capture the spirit of the age, a feeling for the time he is writing about. If the author captures this quality of his past, he has some freedom to alter particulars.

There is one more criterion which is relevant to any kind of fiction, but might be overlooked by the writer of historical fiction. This is the presentation of some central topical theme around which the work revolves--but then this theme is always a part of the problem or complication which animates the characters and events of the novel. Sometimes the historical novelist in his zeal to recapture the physical past might overlook this quality, with the result that his book would be lacking in interest. (However, no one is likely to charge The Matchlock Gun with being dull.) The author of an historical novel may choose his subject from the past (as in the case of Ivanhoe, for example) or he may choose it from the present, in which case time will make it past (for example, The Grapes of Wrath, The Caine Mutiny, or For Whom the Bell Tolls). The Matchlock Gun quite clearly has been reconstructed from the past, since the story is one which has been passed up the family tree, to the branches, so to speak.

Character

The historical novel may have many variations from the contemporary scene, but the least likely area for any radical differences is in the characterization. Places and events will be different, but people tend to remain constant. A little boy in 1960 and a little boy in 1757 will behave pretty much alike. Only when the customs of two societies are drastically different might people seem to behave differently, but that is not always an historical difference. In the historical novel directed at children the characterization is almost always one that would fit a contemporary child. The hero or heroine is usually a boy or a girl who might be involved in some historically important event or who simply might go through some experience which is personally significant. Young Edward is not drawn as an extraordinary hero, nor is his sister Trudy such a heroine. Rather, the characterization is one that shows the children reacting to the given circumstances quite normally, as though there were no other alternative. This convincing presenation is what lends the story such a strong sense of veracity. The character of Gertrude Van Alstyne is more heroic, although it is not blown out of proportion. Gertrude acted heroically during the raid, but she miscalculated about going to Widow Van Alstyne's brick house for protection. The detailed description of the family home, of the children, and of the warm love of Gertrude and Teunis Van Alstyne establish the book as an outstanding example of historical fiction for children.

Structure

The primary theme of The Matchlock Gun is the confrontation with a powerful enemy, but the confrontation is not outside the security of the home; instead it is a confrontation at the home which has become in some senses insecure. Teunis is with the militia, Gertrude is outside, alone within the home are the two children (Edward is "under a strain that no boy only ten years old ought to have"). But after the raid, after the fire, the family is reunited, almost with serenity, or perhaps as a matter of casual fact: the last pages are not melodramatic, as they could have been (in the midst of pain and death); the last scenes are calm and regard the future without fear.

There is another theme beneath the surface of the story: this concerns the opposition of Gertrude and the Widow Van Alstyne. Gertrude is "a black-haired Palatine wench with no 'Van' to her name," and the widow's dislike for Gertrude is mutual. Thus Teunis' advice to take the children to Grandmother Van Alstyne's brick house is disregarded, after a rationalization that the children would be safer off the main route than in the strong brick house. Gertrude repeats this to herself just before the raid, even though she has put, perhaps needlessly, this unneeded strain on her children. We later find that the Widow and her slaves are still safely barricaded at her home, just as predicted. Gertrude has been motivated by considerations other than those of safety.

Paradoxically, the theme is then a confrontation in an insecure home instead of at a secure strange place. But for Edward and Trudy, there is no hint of any insecurity, and the story does not end in disaster.

Style

Walter Edmonds' style is a rich and full one. In addition to the fullness of the figurative language, there is a willingness on the author's part to include what rounds out a scene, and unwillingness to reject what is appropriate just because of his audience. So when Teunis leaves with the militia, the farewell is a bit more than a "so long." There is a kiss, shared by a husband and wife who love each other strongly. Then immediately following this direct description is the figurative opulence of the description of the storm, the horses, the effects of the strong wind.

Theme

The story centers on the bravery that young Edward is able to muster when the demand is made upon him in this life-and-death situation. The Indians are not treated as any special ogres, just as the feared enemy. And the killing of the three Indians does not call forth heroic adulations. It is almost as though it was the matchlock gun and not Edward who is the hero. Edward does answer the question of who killed the Indians with an "I did," but his mother has set the scene so neatly that firing the gun seems incidental to the whole affair.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

Literature Presentation

I. When the class learns that the story for this unit is an "Indian" story, they ought to be led to understand that it is not a "Cowboy and Indian" story of the Old West. They should understand that the story takes place in very early American history in what is now New York State.

II. The book is short enough that it can probably be read aloud in one sitting. But if a schedule does not allow a continuous reading, there are a number of convenient stopping places--after Chapter IV, for example.

III. Discussion

   A. Chapter I: Are officers elected in the army today? How is a militia different from an army? How long is the matchlock gun, in feet? If it was so long, how could a man ever fire it in battle? Do the geese quartering in the clouds suggest anything to you? (The ominous). Why does the Widow Van Alstyne not like Gertrude?

   B. Chapter II: Why were the hams kept in the loft room? What is a feather tick?

   C. Chapter III: Why does Gertrude stay outside as much as possible? Why don't Teunis and Gertrude live with Grandmother?

   D. Chapter IV: Why does Teunis want his family to go over to the big house? How do flour sacks look sitting on horses? How far away is the smoke of the burning settlements? Gertrude Van Alstyne says the Indians are "not very" far away--would you call that far enough away? Why does Gertrude keep making excuses for not going to the Widow's?

   E. Chapter V: Why does Gertrude load the gun with the pebbles, nails, button, and the two bullets? Is the gun more of a cannon or a rifle? (The rifle has a rifled bore; the cannon's is smooth.)

   F. Chapter VI: Why doesn't Gertrude stay inside with the children? Why does Gertrude say she'll call the other names before calling ATEOORD?

3

G. Chapter VII: Is Gertrude a good strategist? Or is she mistaken about the Indians and what they would do?

H. Chapter VIII: What were the Indians planning to do? Did her plan almost misfire?

I. Chapter IX: Did the gun recoil because there was too much powder in it? Or would it have recoiled anyway? Why was there enough light to see Trudy? Did Edward do right to stuff his shirt in his mother's wound? Why does Edward go back for the gun? Why does Trudy keep saying "Bergom op Zoom"?

J. Chapter X: Would the family have been safe at Grandmother's?

Composition Activitities

I. Ask the children to write a short story about a present day boy or girl who was called upon to be brave like Edward.

II. How does the author build his suspense and then resolve it? Have the class pick out the introduction, the foreshadowings, the climax, and the conclusion. Pick the specific passages where the story turns.

III. Have the class build a story together from themes such as those they might have used in Part I above; let them establish in their story the sequential order of the parts mentioned in Part II, adding, if necessary, some part that is lacking.

Language Explorations

I. Vocabulary

Although the vocabulary of the core text is relatively easy to understand, there may be a number of words that the children may not know simply because the words have not been used extensively since pioneer days. A suggested list of words that may need to be clarified:

Guilderland
culverin (a medieval musket)
blind (shutters)
priming
flatiron
stoop
muster
withers
musket

II. Diction

A. Write pairs of expressions on the chalk board like those following and discuss the differences between the expressions in each pair with the children. They should notice the difference in effectiveness and see if they can determine any reason for the differences. They should also remark the construction of the effective passages, attempting to determine what it is about the sentences that makes them better than the others.

1. a. The wind was blowing.
   b. Above the roof the wind hooted softly in the chimney mouth.
2. a. The morning was clear and windy.
   b. In the morning it was clear, with the wind still blowing, and white clouds in a blue sky moving loftily above the Helderbergs.
3. a. The sun had set.
   b. Twilight had stretched across to the Helderbergs.

The children should notice that the differences are not due simply to the difference in sentence length. They should notice the addition of detail in order to make visual images, the appeal to sensory perceptions, and especially the implied comparisons. That is, they should be able to begin to understand in the fourth grade the theory of figurative language--what the writer attempts to do is to write about one thing in such a way that the reader automatically compares the characteristics of two essentially unlike things. The comparison that the writer produces tends to make the mental picture the reader gets more interesting and more vivid.

B. The following comparisons from The Matchlock Gun are all similes, that is, they are figurative devices using the word "like" to indicate a comparison between two things, two things that are not alike in all characteristics. (Those given are only a fraction of those occurring in the text.)

1. He could roar like a bull . . .
2. horses . . . like metal beasts
3. darkness . . . like the cover of a closing book
4. Trudy . . . like a yellow-haired woodchuck
5. pools of rain water like shining eyes

It would probably be most fruitful to have the children examine some expressions like these rather extensively, perhaps according to a series of steps like this:

3

1. Point out the comparison that is being made. (In the first simile, a man is being compared with a bull.)
2. Isolate the specific characteristics that are actually being compared. (In the first simile, it is only the "voices" of the man and the bull that are being compared.)
3. Ask the children to think of other characteristics that the two things being compared do not have in common. (A bull has horns, a man does not; a bull has four legs, a man has two; a man can speak words, a bull cannot; etc.)
4. Perhaps the hardest part of the process, yet probably the most important, is to get the children to understand what effect the figurative language actually has on them. (The best way to get at this problem is to ask the children what there is about a bull that they then automatically think is also true about the man. They can probably think of "strength," "courage," "a desire to protect his family against danger," etc. Then they should be led even further to discover that the context in which the figurative language is used makes a difference, that if this particular simile were applied to a "villain" it would probably make them think of "meanness," "ugliness," etc., rather than of characteristics like "courage." This is probably too far to carry any single simile in analysis with fourth grade children; but if many figures of speech are analyzed carefully, the "cumulative analysis" should cover all these points quite effectively.)

C. After the children have examined a number of figures of speech all alike (similes), they might then be able to analyze the effectiveness of many more, and more complex, examples of figurative language. Their first, and sometimes most difficult, task will be to discover exactly what is being compared. They may even be able to discover for themselves that most "images" and "sensory perceptions" are also built upon implied comparisons just as the similes they have been analyzing are built upon stated comparisons. There are a great many passages worthy of examination in the core text.

Extended Activities

I. Have some of the students look into the different uniforms that have been worn both by the U. S. Army and by militias before the revolution.

II. Make a model of the matchlock gun. And if that is done, make a musket, and so on. Have some students do research on the different kinds of guns used since the invention of gunpowder.

POETRY:

"Get Up and Bar the Door" Golden Treasury of Poetry
(This very popular old English ballad, although it is primarily a joke, may suggest some parallels to the children with the stubborn behavior of the "Van Alstyne women" and the trouble it causes. This may be an effective way to demonstrate to fourth grade children the importance to the book of a conflict that they may not immediately understand or even recognize.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Erick Berry, Hay-foot, Straw-foot (New York: The Viking Press, 1954).
The adventures of a drummer-boy during the French and Indian War.

Helen Fuller Orton, Hoof-Beats of Freedom (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1936).
The exciting story of a young boy who helped Washington during the Revolutionary War.

Unit 43: Biography:

WILLA

BIOGRAPHY:
WILLA

CORE TEXT:

Ruth Franchere, Willa (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company 1958).

ALTERNATE TEXTS:

Mildred Pace, Clara Barton (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941).

Carl Sandburg, Abe Lincoln Grows Up (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1928).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

This biography of Willa Cather is both something more and something less than a standard biography. Yet its limitation might very easily be in this instance a virtue; the book is limited by being the story of Willa Cather's growing up (until the age of sixteen). The focus throughout the book, therefore, is on a young girl--an intensified portrait with much attention to detail. The narrower scope of Willa will also interest the students, who will very likely find the perspective of youth especially appealing. And the image of Willa Cather that Ruth Franchere presents is not a cold, one-sided picture, but rather a warm portrait showing both shortcomings and virtues, though the admirable qualities greatly overshadow the others, making her a character worthy of emulation.

The objectives of this unit are (1) to present the students with an accurate, detailed, interesting story about a young girl who grew up to become one of the great American writers; (2) to exhibit those special qualities which suggest the writer's sensibility, the heightened awareness of surroundings; (3) to develop in the students a sense of historical time; and (4) to strengthen the student's notions of biography as a type of good literature.

This unit is inseparably related to the other "biography" units in the curriculum; because of its particular subject matter, it is related to the elementary and secondary "historical fiction" units that display the American past, and especially the "frontier spirit" of the builders of America. In addition to the elementary units on historical fiction, the teacher may find helpful the Grade 7 unit, Stories of the American West and the Grade 8 unit The Historical Novel, as well as the Grade 8 unit, The Heritage of the Frontier. The teacher will also find a great fund of information in the Grade 11 material, Themes in American Civilization; Part I: Individualism and Nature.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER:

Author

See the note about the author, Ruth Franchere, at the very end of the core text.

Genre

Elementary school children probably encounter more biography than any other form of non-fiction, and biography is becoming increasingly popular among writers and readers of children's books. With the limitation that only the earlier years of Willa Cather's life are covered, Willa suits the genre very well, for a biography is the story of a person's life.

There are a number of basic differences between biographies written for children and the scholarly biographies written for adults. Any respectable biography is accurate and authentic in its details as well as in general pattern. Juvenile biographies are no exception; even though they leave out some details inappropriate to the audience and give added emphasis to others, yet one must ask that they not be inaccurate or misleading in what is presented. This selection of incident gives the students an opportunity to observe the accumulation of details which create a composite picture of what a person is and what he does, a process which is akin to the logical process of marshalling data to create a coherent inductive argument. For older children especially, the study of biography may demonstrate the responsibility a writer assumes for accuracy and reliability. And this particular story of Willa Cather can further suggest how the author's particular intentions will determine just which incidents are included or omitted.

Character

Since a biography usually seeks to tell the life story of an individual, the element of character is perhaps the most important single element in a biography. The biographer must be honest in his presentation of that character, revealing both the faults and weaknesses as well as the virtues and strengths of his subject. More and more biographies are moving away from the idol-worshipping tales with didactic motives, so that recent biographies are most likely to present a character with unstereotyped qualities of humanity. The overwhelming concern of the author should always be to present his subject as accurately and as near to what he really was as is possible. It is just one more tribute to the greatness of the author and his subject to recognize that in spite of its uninhibited moral purpose Boswell's Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson remains the greatest biography ever written. One of Boswell's purposes was the moral improvement of the reader, but he conceived of the biography as a history that should reveal every side of its subject completely and accurately, in order to exhibit what a man ought and ought not do with his life.

The primary concern in biographies written for children is not primarily the revelation of the "inner man." Children do not judge a man by what he is so much as by what he does. They do not judge him by his motives, his psychological actions and reactions, not even by his private virtues and vices; they judge the man by his actions, and only by the virtues and vices that he exhibits in those actions. Therefore the things the character says and does are more important in juvenile biography. If the biographer is a responsible one, he will concentrate on revealing those outstanding characteristics, and he will perform the task of selection scrupulously. Consider the description of Henry Lambrecht's mother when Henry has been bitten by the rattlesnake: "By the time Henry fell to the ground, his mother, pale and tight-lipped, was in the yard, too, the other children around her . . . . Willa saw great drops of perspiration standing on her forehead . . . . " The author doesn't say directly that a character shows great courage and presence of mind; Mrs. Lambrecht simply acts courageously and sanely. And the children can judge very well for themselves whether Mrs. Lambrecht or Willa was frightened, or courageous, or cowardly, etc.

Structure

Usually one cannot distinguish structural "motifs" or patterns in the body of literature identified as "biography" since obviously the story of a person's life is largely determined by that person's life. However, in Willa the reader might well feel that he can distinguish some motif. Since the conscious selection of incident by the author might suggest certain themes, it may well be that Ruth Franchere has chosen those incidents which contribute most to the later image we have of Willa Cather, the great creative writer. (See also the section headed Theme.) At any rate, the biographer is almost necessarily concerned more with selection than with arrangement, especially since the dramatic effect of the biography accumulates from the character's development over a period of time. In fact, one of the values of teaching biography is to develop this sense of historical time, since in most other children's literature the time is somehow frozen into "once upon a time," which is really no time at all.

Style

In order to achieve a dramatic effect, most biographers for children will introduce dialogue. The dialogue is for the most part invented by the author; Ruth Franchere cannot know what actual words Willa Cather used on any particular occasion except in very rare instances where the speech was recorded in some way. This problem leads to the distinction of "fictionalized biography" from "biographical fiction." If the facts of a biography can be largely documented and only a few liberties have been taken with such matters as specific dialogue, the story is called "fictionalized biography." If the facts of the historical character can only be documented in general and the story itself is largely the creation of the author, centered around those general facts, the story is called "biographical fiction." Willa very clearly is "fictionalized biography," much the preferable of the two. We do have invented dialogue, but the incidents are far from imaginary--they are real. We would have to say that the feeling of greater intimacy gained by the addition of the dialogue adds to the dramatic quality of the story, since Willa's life becomes immediate to us as we hear her voice in the story. When careful and honest research is behind that "voice," the author can create a work that contributes measurably to children's literature.

Theme

A skillful biographer will not simply list the details of his subject's life in chronological order; even if he wanted to do so, there would be too many. The biographer will select details, usually choosing what will constitute some pattern. The themes that Ruth Franchere develops are indicative of those qualities which were contributing to the evolution of the sensibility and genius of Willa Cather, the future novelist. Miss Cather's great interest in people is shown by the two related themes of her willing friendship and love. The themes of friendship and love can be seen to contribute to the fine sense of characterization evident in her writing, and a theme of great intellectual curiosity shows the development of what later led to her use of a rich variety of subjects, and especially her treatment of the middle western pioneer.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

Literature Presentation

I. Some fourth grade children, especially in the Midwest, may have heard of Willa Cather, especially since she was a "Nebraskan" who wrote about Nebraska. But the teacher should not introduce the book as a story to be read just because it is about Nebraska. The time of the story and the frontier setting may make the book particularly attractive to the children, but they should understand that the book is being presented primarily because it is a well-written story about an interesting personality.

II. The teacher should arrange to read the entire book aloud if at all possible, perhaps two or three chapters at a time.

III. Discussion may follow several channels, depending on, for example, the children's familiarity with terms and descriptions included. Possible topics follow.

A. Chapter 1:

1. What did Willa find so different about Nebraska after leaving Virginia? Where is Virginia? Where is Red Cloud?
2. Why didn't Willa's mother want her to talk to the strangers? Where were the strangers from? Where is Bohemia?

B. Chapter 2:

1. What are soddies? Why was Nebraska sod tough and thick?
2. How many years ago was it that Willa and her family moved to Nebraska?

C. Chapter 3:

1. What was the cave that held the butter and bacon like? Why don't we have caves now? What do we have?
2. Why didn't Willa want a saddle for Boots?

D. Chapter 4:

1. Why did Willa say that Nebraska was good for sick people?
2. Why was Willa so interested in remembering "Streuselkuchen" and how to pronounce it?
3. Did Henry do the right thing after the snake bite?

E. Chapter 5:

1. Why did Willa press flowers? Why did Willa's mother?
2. Why was *The Count of Monte Cristo* such a thrill for Willa? If it wasn't a movie or on TV, how was it presented?

F. Chapter 6:

1. Why did Willa's family move to Red Cloud?
2. Was Willa's mother happy about the way Willa asked to sleep in the attic of the new house?

G. Chapter 7:

1. What is the difference between an opera and a concert?
2. Why did Willa have to start with scales and exercises on the piano?

H. Chapter 8:

1. Why does the Republican River shift its course?
2. Why was it dangerous for Willa to be near the river?

I. Chapter 9:

1. Why was Willa so interested in Coronado?
2. Why does Willa hide in closets, sneak in side doors? Does her curiosity have anything to do with her writing books in later years?

J. Chapter 10:

1. Why did Willa have to rewrite plays for the opera house?
2. Why did Mrs. Goudy send Willa to Uncle William Ducker?

K. Chapter 11:

1. Why is Willa so interested in Dr. McKeeby's books?
2. Why does Willa have her hair cut? Why does Willa's mother accept everything Willa does?
3. What was in "the little bottle"?

L. Chapter 12:

1. How does Blind Boone remember so much music? How is he able to play a piece after hearing it only once?
2. Do you think Annie was glad when Blind Boone could play her piece?

M. Chapter 13:

1. Why does Willa climb the windmill? Is there anything Willa is afraid of? Is it good to be afraid of some things?
2. Why was the storm beautiful?

N. Chapter 14:

1. Why did Willa feel she had to go to college?
2. What did Willa find especially fascinating at the Gerbers'? Why did the Gerbers find Willa fascinating?

O. Chapter 15:

1. Was Willa in a large graduating class?
2. What was wrong with the first two commencement addresses?

Composition Activities

I. Using such a title as "All About Me," "Here I Am," or "Look at Me," have each child write a story about an incident in his life. He might use as a topic or an opening phrase something like:

The first birthday party I remember . . .
My favorite gift . . .
My most embarrassing moment . . .
The happiest day in my life . . .
The worst thing I ever did was . . .
The day I got lost . . .
I'm glad I . . .

II. Writing "life lines": Working as groups or independently, have the class write one line summaries of the life of Willa Cather. (Example: "Willa Cather loved the Nebraska plains when she was a child and grew up to write stories about Nebraska and the people who lived there.")

III. Gather postcards or other illustrations of historic or scenic places in Nebraska: Chimney Rock, Mitchell Pass, Scotts Bluff, Snake River Falls, the Missouri River, the Sand Hills and others. Ask the children to write descriptions of some of these landmarks, attempting to make their "word pictures" as much like the real pictures as possible. Some of the children may actually have been to these places; they might, as an exercise in oral composition, attempt to tell the class how the landmarks looked different from the way they appear in the picture. In order further to strengthen a sense of history in the children, ask some of them to attempt to make their word descriptions so that they would represent the way these landmarks would have looked to the first settlers in Nebraska, that is, without any telephone or high tension wires, without any signs, or railroads, or farms, or even in most cases any trees visible as they might be visible on the postcard pictures the students are using.

Language Explorations

I. Vocabulary

A. Discuss words which might be foreign to fourth graders. Place some of the following on the blackboard.

forlorn
immigrant
Bohemian
inquiringly
scudded
rickety
helter-skelter
cinnamon
beseechingly
swish
soddies
dreariness
Mormon
reproachfully
abruptly
ambled
contentedly
sedately
flexible
Valkyrie
Coronado

B. As the story progresses, keep a collective class list of regional words related to phenomena of nature. Examples: plains, prairie, sod, sand hills, rolling hills, ravine, gully, dunes, blowouts, cloudburst, flash flood, bottom land, creek (Midwest pronunciation is often: crick).

II. Morphology

A list of words containing either prefixes or suffixes can be taken from *Willa*. The base or root words should be found, and then the teacher should explain (or teacher and class could discuss) how prefixes and suffixes change the meanings of base words. Some examples:

Prefixes	Suffixes
immigrant	healthful
forelegs	wooden
windmill	

III. History of Language

In order to give the children some sense of the way words and names attach meanings to themselves, let them investigate some of the interesting place names in Nebraska. They should be able to discover the origin of the name "Red Cloud," for example, the little town in which Willa Cather grew up. They could get some information about the origins of names of larger cities in Nebraska (like Omaha, Grand Island, Norfolk, Alliance, North Platte, Falls City, etc.) by writing to the chamber of commerce in each town.

The class can learn a great deal about the interesting origins of Nebraska names (Crab Orchard, Table Rock, Cody, Broken Bow, Lone Tree--to name a few) in a book published by the University of Nebraska Press called *Place Names in Nebraska*.

Extended Activities

I. Make a family tree of Willa Cather's family.

II. The story will have greater meaning for the children if time is spent in developing an understanding of the time and place of Willa Cather's childhood. The children may share what knowledge they have of pioneer days, or they might bring antiques or curios of pioneer days in America or from countries immigrants may have come from. Old pictures would be helpful too.

III. Using paint, crayon or chalk, prepare a story picture of Willa Cather's early childhood in Nebraska. Each child could be assigned a special subject. This will help to establish the sequence of events, especially if the story is mounted and retold from the pictures. These are only a few of the possible subjects.

1. The meeting at the station
2. Grandfather Cather's home
3. Annie's sod house
4. Boots

POETRY:

Violet Alleyn Storey, "Neighborly" *Time for Poetry*
(This poem, not particularly distinguished as poetry, nevertheless reveals something of the custom of "neighboring " so very, very important to the early settlers of a frontier. Not only was it "nice" to be "good neighbors" in the early days of Nebraska, because of the common threats of natural disaster constantly facing the pioneers it was absolutely necessary for neighbors to share their goods and especially their talents.)

Carl Sandburg, "Buffalo Dusk" *Time for Poetry*
(This very "simple" little poem expresses with eloquent restraint a regret for the passing of an era. Although Willa Cather, as an ambitious and highly curious young lady, constantly looked to the future and to progress, more than once in the book a respect for her heritage is prominent along with some nostalgia concerning life during the early days on the prairie.)

Hamlin Garland, "Do You Fear the Wind?" *Time for Poetry*
(Any child who fears storms yet who understands in the least Willa's defiance of the storm in Chapter 13 will understand Hamlin Garland's reaction to a storm.)

Richard LeGallienne, "I Meant to Do My Work Today" *Golden Treasury of Poetry*

(A student with a proper understanding of *Willa* will also understand the strong appeal of nature that this poem so ably and so economically expresses.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Nina Brown Baker, *Pike of Pike's Peak* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1953).
An exciting and well-written biography of a soldier who loved peace.

Clyde Robert Bulla, *Squanto, Friend of the White Man* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1954).
A true story of Squanto, who was the first American Indian to visit Europe.

Marguerite Henry and Wesley Dennis, *Benjamin West and His Cat Grimalkin* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1947).
The story of how a Quaker boy became a great painter.

Marguerite Vance, *Martha, Daughter of Virginia* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1947).
The story of Martha and George Washington.

Opal Wheeler, *Stephen Foster and His Little Dog Tray* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1941).
Includes the words and music of many of his best-loved songs.

Unit 44: Biography:

LEIF THE LUCKY

BIOGRAPHY:
LEIF THE LUCKY

CORE TEXT:

Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire, Leif the Lucky (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1941).

ALTERNATE TEXT:

James Daugherty, Daniel Boone (New York: The Viking Press, 1939).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

The selection for this unit, Leif the Lucky, is an interesting biographical introduction to the earliest European discoveries of the New World. It presents in a clear, well-illustrated text the stories of the Norsemen, Eric the Red and his son, Leif the Lucky, who colonized first Greenland and then the Northern coast of North America some 1000 years ago. And it was Leif the Lucky who introduced Christianity to the Norwegian colonies of Iceland and Greenland. The story of Eric the Red and Leif the Lucky is first the story of discoveries after Eric is banned from Norway and later from Iceland, discoveries of Greenland and Vinland (North America). Then follow the hard years of colonization, years which prove so difficult that the western lands are abandoned and soon forgotten. The story of the Norse explorations is reconstructed from old manuscripts which were ignored and forgotten for many years and only fairly recently rediscovered. The story is especially interesting because of our Columbian heritage; it contains an important "if": What if the Norsemen had not let their knowledge of the western continent fade away? How much different might the history of the Americas have been?

The objectives of this unit are (1) to present to the students an interesting story about the earliest European discoverer of America, a surprising forerunner of Columbus; (2) to present those qualities of men who show great courage in facing the unknown, often in the face of great hardships; (3) to show students the tricks that history may play with long-kept secrets; and (4) to extend the students' interest in the literary biography.

This unit is closely related to the other "biography" units in the curriculum; and because of its particular subject, it leads directly to the elementary and secondary units dealing with the American past. It is related to the eighth grade unit on the Odyssey as well as to the first grade unit on Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain, the third grade unit on Christopher Columbus, and the sixth grade unit on *Cartier Sails the St. Lawrence.* In addition to the sea parallels, there is the Grade 9 unit, *The Leader and the Group*. The relationships can be extended to include such as the units dealing with the pioneer spirit (*Heritage of the Frontier*) or the elementary unit on Norse mythology (*The Children of Odin*).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER:

Author

The D'Aulaires are among the most outstanding authors of authentic biographies for primary children. They have the ability to present facts in a simple and beautiful way, yet keeping the characters very much alive not only through their language but through the rich detail of their colorful illustrations. They use the child's criteria for judgment of a man: what he does. Their books concentrate on the characteristics their subjects had as children that enabled them to accomplish the feats of their adulthood.

Genre

The most common form of non-fiction that elementary school children encounter today is biography, and it is becoming increasingly popular among writers and readers of children's books. The genre of biography is identified quite simply: it is the story of a person's life. There is much that can be said to distinguish biography from other genres, as well as to distinguish good biography from bad. The test is more than maintaining the reader's interest; the author must at the same time keep faith with historical detail. And when the audience is further limited to elementary school children, the concern is further complicated. Certain details which might have been morbid or sordid will be played down, sometimes even not mentioned. (In *Leif the Lucky* the quarreling of Eric is given little space.) Yet though the documentation may be less than perfect and the detail selective, it is still necessary that a biography should not be inaccurate or misleading in what it does present. The D'Aulaires are especially noted for the accuracy of detail in their biographies for children; they insist on studying the documentary evidence for a man's life and on actually seeing the scenes which they represent in their illustrations when they write a book.

In this connection, the study of biography gives students an opportunity to observe the marshalling of particular details to create a composite picture of what a man is and what a man does, a process very close to the construction of a good inductive argument. And the older the child, the more he will appreciate the author's problem in the reconstruction of the figure.

Character

Since a biography usually seeks to tell the life story of an individual, that life story will be the most important single element in a biography. However, in Leif the Lucky the concern is more with presenting the historical situation, of which Leif and his father Eric are a part, than with the full portrayal of Leif. Thus the characterization of Leif is not comparable to such as that of Columbus in Christopher Columbus and His Brothers. And were the D'Aulaires to do much more with character presentation, it would have to be essentially fictional reconstruction. But, since the D'Aulaires had so little documentary evidence for this story, the rather flat characterization testifies to a biographical honesty. Were the genre the novel instead of biography, then we would be justified in expecting more detail, but it is not so.

What characterization we do have in Leif the Lucky is arrived at through action rather than through the author's directly telling us what kind of character Leif had. We are not told outright that Leif was brave; instead we have incidents which show bravery: "'No one shall laugh at us as they laughed at Bjarne and say we didn't explore the land,' said Leif. So he sailed up to the shore and landed at the mouth of a river." Thus Leif is revealed by his actions, and the students are well able to determine for themselves what kind of a man he was.

Structure

One cannot usually distinguish definite structural "motifs" or patterns in the body of literature identified as "biography" since the story of a man's life is pretty much determined by the facts of the man's life. Nearly all biographies are told in a straight chronological pattern. The variations that distinguish one biographer from another depend on the selection of incident, and, in biography for children, on illustrations. Yet there is some "motif" in Leif the Lucky, which the D'Aulaires have brought out, and this pattern is the gradual realization of the discovery of new lands, the awakening interest, the dying interest, and finally the lost interest. We have a kind of organic birth, growth and death superimposed on the exploration and the discovery of the New World. This evolutionary pattern is useful for developing a historical sense of time in the student at a fairly early age.

Style

In order to heighten the dramatic effect, most biographers will introduce dialogue. The dialogue is for the most part invented, and in the case of Leif the Lucky it is obviously completely invented. This problem leads to a consideration of the distinction between "fictionalized biography" and "biographical fiction." When an author invents dialogue or puts thoughts into the heads of his characters in order to make a story "live," he may or may not have some documentary evidence to form the basis for what he invents. If the facts which the dialogue speaks of can be largely documented, and only a few liberties have been taken with the subject, then the work is "fictionalized biography." If the characterization is based on few facts, and is nearly all fictitious, then the work is "biographical fiction." Leif the Lucky can be called "fictionalized biography"--much the preferable of the two. Such a story is a contribution to children's literature if the retelling is done conscientiously.

Theme

We have already suggested under the heading of "Structure" that the biographer does not simply tell a story and let the facts fall where they may. As long as the biographer cannot recapture 100% of a man's life, he will have to be selective in preparing a biography; and once selective, he will choose what suits him. A biography of Leonardo da Vinci by another artist would be quite different from one by a fellow scientist. And the choice of audience will similarly affect the choice for inclusion of material. The theme of Leif the Lucky is, as we have said, one of awakening to the new land to the west and then a loss of that awakening until a later date. The final two sentences emphasize this theme: "As the Norsemen in Greenland were forgotten, so were the stories of Vinland. And still for many hundred years the Indians in America could enjoy their land in peace."

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

Literature Presentation

I. Perhaps some of the Background material could be presented by the teacher as she shows some of the introductory pictures of the book (such as the map at the very beginning).

II. Read the story slowly, being sure to show the excellent illustrations. The pictures are a very important part of this book. Perhaps several reading sessions will be necessary.

III. The discussion questions which follow are designed for use after three reading sessions: (1) the first twelve pages, (2) the next twenty-two pages, (3) the remainder of the book.

   A. The class will need help in establishing an idea of the chronological events in the book. It would probably be most helpful to do this a day at a time after each reading. Lead the group to name the events themselves. For example:

First day's reading session:

1. Eric the Red sailed from Norway to Iceland and later to Greenland.
2. Eric the Red brought his family to Greenland, including his young son Leif.
3. The other chieftains settled along other fjords and Eric's family made their home at Brattali.

Second day's reading session:

4. Leif grew up to be a strong young man.
5. Leif returned to Norway, where he met King Olav.
6. Leif spent the winter with King Olav and a Christian.
7. In the spring, Leif set out for Greenland.
8. Leif lost his way at sea and landed on Vinland.
9. In the fall, Leif returned to Greenland.

Third day's reading session:

10. Leif introduced Christianity all over Greenland.
11. Leif directed another group of people to Vinland.
12. A group of Indians, called the Skraellinger, became angry and attacked the Norsemen.
13. The Norsemen returned to Greenland.
14. Eric the Red died and Leif the Lucky was the leader on Greenland.
15. After many, many years, the Norsemen on Greenland lost contact with the rest of the world.

B. Discussion Questions: Eric the Red and the Boyhood of Leif

1. Explain that the animal designs in the illustrations are patterned after both real and imaginary creatures of the Northlands; the household articles are drawn from those deposited in museums as well as from descriptions in old manuscripts.
2. Where is Norway? Where is Greenland? (Use the map in the book to point out the locations.)
3. How does the size of the Norse boats compare with that of a modern ocean liner?
4. What are the "sea mountains"? How large can icebergs be?
5. What part of an iceberg is above the water? (10%)
6. What kind of food was eaten on the voyages?
7. Have you ever seen the Northern Lights? What did the Northern Lights mean to Leif?

C. Discussion Questions: Leif's Youth

1. How did the visitors to Eric's hall influence Leif?

2. Did the Norse ships use oars, sails, or both?
3. Why did Leif wait so long to come into the King's presence?
4. How was Leif different from the fat man who ate too much?
5. Why was the land that Leif discovered called Vinland?
6. Why is Iceland called Iceland? Why is Greenland called Greenland?

D. Discussion Questions: The Colonization

1. Why did the merchantman Torfinn become a colonist?
2. Why did Torfinn keep sailing for Vinland?
3. Who did the Skraellinger think the Norsemen were?
4. What was the great black ball the Skraellinger threw at the Norsemen? How can a woman sharpen a sword on her flesh?
5. Why did the Norsemen stop going to Vinland? Why did they leave Greenland?

Composition Activities

I. Select one of the sea voyages that Leif made and, as a class project, write a diary recording the happenings on the trip. The voyage that Leif made as a child would be especially suitable for this activity in a fourth grade class.

II. Have the children pretend to be aboard the ship when it sighted Vinland. They could then write brief descriptions of the land and of the reactions of the other passengers when land was sighted.

III. Have the students pretend to be one of the two Skraellinger boys who were captured. Have them write paragraphs describing how they felt when they were captured.

IV. Discuss how it would feel to be on a Viking ship during a bad storm at sea. With the class, list descriptive words which would help tell how the waves appeared or how the boat felt in the water. Experiment with onomatopoeia, expecting such words as swish, splash, swoop, sweep, hiss, boom, plunge, crack and others. When an interesting vocabulary has been established, ask the class to write descriptive paragraphs.

Language Explorations

I. History of the Language

A. In order to examine the "foreign" origins of some words and the ways in which words change in meaning as languages develop, discuss with the children the following items:

1. "fjord"--(arm of the sea): What looks "different" about the spelling of the word? In the Webster New World Dictionary, College Edition, only the words "fjord" and "fjeld" begin with the "fj." Their origins are Norwegian. Point out that words sometimes derive their origins from geographic causes.
2. "thrall"--(slave or bondsman): Do you ever use this word? Why is it used in the story? Why not today? ("enthralled")
3. "snout"--(muzzle, or nose and jaws of an animal): Can you think of unpleasant meanings attached to this word?
4. "rudder" (1. a broad, flat, movable piece of wood used to steer a boat. 2. a similar piece used to steer an aircraft): Would you say that this word has added meanings since the days of the Vikings?

B. Discuss how Leif's full name came to be Leif Ericson. (Eric's son). Let the group discover for themselves that this is the history of many Scandinavian names. (Anderson, Nelson, Peterson and many others.) Lead them to see interesting facts about other surnames:

1. The use of "van" (Dutch) and "von" (German) as a prefix. Both mean "of" or "from" and refer to a place of origin. VanDyke, for example, would mean "of the dyke." "De," "du," "de la," and "des" (French) have the same meaning, so that John du field (John of the field) became John Duffield.
2. Often a last name stems from a man's occupation. John the miller became John Miller and thus a family name evolved. The children will enjoy finding other examples of this.
3. As a class project, have each child learn what he can about the derivation of his family name and share this with the rest of the group.

This can then lead to a discussion of what words and what kinds of words come to us from the German family of languages (German, Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch, etc.). Students can suggest words, look up their origin, and try to decide what kinds of words the old Vikings (Anglo-Saxons and Danes) would have given us.

II. Diction

Talk about the settings of stories using familiar examples from other readings. When the students have recognized a certain setting, have them pick what words are most useful to capture the quality of the setting. How many of these words have sounds which suggest cold? (Frost, frigid, frozen, chill, shiver are a few possibilities.) Is the cold in the word or in the speaker's mind? (Are these distinctions of word association cultural?) Post the student list for use in individual compositions.

Extended Activities

I. Norse Mythology: Initiate discussion on what Leif imagined he saw in the Northern Lights. Who were Odin and Tor (Thor)? If the students have not heard of the Norse myths (and enough will not have), tell them briefly that Odin was thought to be the god of war and his son, Thor, to be the god of thunder who owned a magic hammer with which he destroyed the enemies of the gods. A fuller explanation of Norse mythology would be to read aloud Chapter I of Thunder of the Gods by Dorothy Hosford (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1952) which tells about Odin, Thor, and other Norse gods.

II. Because the pictures suit the text so well and are so colorful, this would be a good time to talk about how they are printed. As the inside cover of the book indicated, the pictures were lithographed on stone in five colors. Perhaps the teacher would like to use five potato stamps and five colors of tempera, letting the children experiment to see if they can simulate the D'Aulaires' pictures. If your community has some type of print shop or newspaper that does use color, this would be a fine opportunity to take a field trip.

POETRY:

Thomas Lovell Beddoes, "Sea Song" Golden Treasury of Poetry
(Both the rhythm and the words of this poem exhibit the effect of the "pull of the sea." The last stanza especially achieves the same sort of exhilaration with adventure and discovery that Leif Ericson must have felt on the high seas.)

James Berry Bensel, "February" Golden Treasury of Poetry
(This poem is especially notable for the precision and the excellence of the images it presents. It does express, too, a sense of the peacefulness of a long winter, and long winter nights, such as those the Norsemen experienced.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire, Abraham Lincoln (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1938).
This book, like the other D'Aulaire biographies, presents the youth as the father of the man. In other words, those qualities which made the mature figure so able are presented as they appeared in the youth.